



WFP Armenia Country Brief

Highlights

- Jointly with FAO and IOM, WFP Armenia celebrated World Food Day and participated in 2017 ArmProdExpo.
- According to World Bank, prospects for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in Armenia remain positive.
- WFP commemorated the UN's 25th anniversary in Armenia with a celebratory event at the Masis School in Ararat province.

WFP Assistance

Sustainable School Feeding in Armenia	Total Requirements (in USD)	Total Received (in USD)	6 Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)*
		30.3 m	29.1 m (96%)

*November 2017 – April 2018
Based on projected requirements under the TICSP due to start January 2018

Using either in-kind or cash modality, WFP provides hot nutritious meals for 180 days out of the school year to 60,000 primary school children in 587 schools in six out of Armenia's ten provinces, comprising 40 percent of the primary student population in Armenia (not including the capital Yerevan). The objective is to support the food security for these children; provide a safety net for their families; and address Armenia's nutritional concerns. Additionally, WFP distributes take-home entitlements to 1,700 kitchen staff involved in the daily preparation of school meals, allowing them to receive either food or cash entitlements calculated for a family of five. This contributes to the economic and social empowerment of unemployed women from local communities, as the food entitlements are often the only source to cover the daily food needs of their household.

The Government-led portion of the programme covers 30,000 schoolchildren in 340 schools in four provinces: Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Ararat and Tavush, and operates exclusively through cash transfers (CBT). Both WFP and the Government programme cover primary school children from grades 1-4.

Recent operationalisation and transfer of funds from WFP to the recently created national Sustainable School Feeding Foundation (SSFF) provided WFP with an opportunity to foster the transfer of knowledge and training, broadening and scaling-up its daily work with the Government on all aspects of the programme implementation. Furthermore, with the technical support of WFP's cooperating partner, Social and Industrial Food Services Institute (SIFI), the Government focuses on further handover, which should be completed in 2023, with the aim of strengthening government capacity to deliver nutritious, locally sourced school meals in Armenia.

At the initial phase of the hand-over in 2014, government-led schools implemented dry instead of hot

feeding, mostly providing biscuits and juice to children. However, as of May 2017, around 67 percent of schools in these provinces have moved to providing hot, nutritious meals. Compared to a snack modality, hot feeding provides multiple health benefits, including dietary diversity and rich source of micronutrients. Lessons learned from the initial hand-over revealed the need for a gradual approach with adequate forward planning and targeted capacity development activities to prevent reversing the programme quality.

The Government and WFP agreed on a transitional model combining a set of activities to prepare for a smooth handover. In addition to introducing cash transfers, the SSFF, WFP and SIFI deliver tailored trainings to school headmasters and teachers, improve school infrastructure, provide kitchen equipment, and mobilize state and non-state partners to coordinate interventions for nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, school rehabilitation, finance and education. This successful innovative model implemented in Tavush will be replicated in other provinces.

WFP's vision is to gradually transition to a home-grown school meals approach, linking schools to farmers, providing fresh and locally sourced food to children, thus boosting the local economy.

WFP builds strategic partnerships not only with the Government and the United Nations agencies, but also with international financial institutions, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and research institutions, like IFPRI, London School of Economics and Caucasus Research Resource Center. Understanding the importance of operational partnerships, WFP broadened its network to many international and national organisations.

In Numbers

60,000 primary school children reached

1,700 kitchen helpers assisted with family entitlements

**People Assisted
October 2017**



Main Photo Credit: Gayane Gajyan
Caption: Light blue and white balloons attached to a UN flag were flown outside the Masis School in commemoration of the UN's 25th anniversary in Armenia.

Country Background & Strategy



Operational Updates

WFP celebrated the World Food Day at Vahramberd School in Shirak province together with FAO and IOM, and held a stand at the annual ArmProdExpo in Yerevan from 13 to 15 October:

The World Food Day was celebrated in a festive atmosphere in Vahramberd community school in Shirak province. The Deputy Governor of Shirak province, representatives of local authorities, as well as FAO, IOM, and WFP staff shared the daily meal supported through WFP School Meals Programme prepared for the schoolchildren. Among other dishes, children and guests had the opportunity to taste a quinoa vegetable salad. The manager of the start-up company presented the nutritional values of quinoa and the benefits it has for the schoolchildren consuming it. WFP Armenia had initial discussions for possible collaboration to introduce this protein-rich cereal, in school meals' composition in the future.

Local Armenian farmers and food industry businesses gathered at the ArmProdExpo between 13 to 15 October. WFP jointly with the SSFF held a stand next to FAO, aiming to foster relationships with local producers to boost potentially the Home-Grown School Meals model. WFP Country Director, Pascale Micheau, had the opportunity to present the latest School Meals Programme's achievements in Armenia to the Prime Minister, His Excellency, Karen Karapetyan, during his visit to the expo. The successful partnerships WFP has with FAO and the SSFF, and recently with rural retailers and producers were stressed.

Global Innovation Index 2017 and World Bank assessment on economic development in Armenia:

According to the Global Innovation Index 2017, Armenia is ranked as an "innovation achiever" – a category comprising 17 economies, which outperform in innovation relative to their level of development. An event, which brought together leading experts on global technological innovation, representatives of academia, governments and the UN community, highlighted the role of innovation in promoting economic growth and sustainable development. Armenia's case was highlighted to demonstrate that innovation is not limited to the most advanced economies. However, the World Bank assesses that prospects for economic growth and poverty reduction in Armenia are marked by significant uncertainty, related to coexistent internal situation and external factors. The forecast of the growth of the Armenian economy is predicted at the level of 4.5% in 2017, and about 4% in 2018-19.

WFP commemorated UN's 25th anniversary in

Armenia with a celebratory event at the Masis School in Ararat Marz. UN representatives from WFP, UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF were warmly greeted by students and administration, proceeding afterwards to helping kitchen staff prepare food for the school's 447 students who benefit from the National School Meals Programme. Lunch was followed by an informative presentation from the school's headmistress who highlighted the successes of the School Meals Programme, in particular conveying their improved menus, which include an appropriate amount of kilocalories, vitamin a, vitamin b, iron, and folic acid over ten-day periods. The school's students now exhibit higher attendance rates, greater energy, and an improved ability to retain information.

Armenia is a landlocked country and highly vulnerable to external shock factors, including global economic downturn and conflicts. Border closures with neighbouring Turkey and Azerbaijan since Armenia's independence in 1991 have constrained economic development of the state. According to the latest [National Statistical Service](#) data, the poverty rate reached 29.8 percent of the population in 2015. Armenia's HDI, which stands at 0.743, remains low compared to the average HDI of neighbouring countries in the region, according to the latest data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

WFP established its presence in Armenia in 1993 with an emergency operation. During 1999, the emergency operation was replaced with a protracted relief and recovery operation. Since 2010, the Programme has shifted to development assistance, through Development Project 200128 – 'Development of Sustainable School Feeding'. Aligned with the Government's priorities, WFP continues to support the ongoing development of a National sustainable school feeding programme.

Based on the [Comprehensive Food Security, Vulnerability and Nutrition Analysis \(CFSVNA\)](#) conducted in March 2016, WFP proposes to keep the focus on school meals, with a potential expansion to social protection programming around disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness. The results of National Zero Hunger Strategic Review, anticipated to be endorsed by the Government in November 2017, will shape the Country Strategic Plan of WFP from 2019 onwards.

Population: **2.97 million**

2016 Human Development Index: **84 out of 188**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **19% of children between 0-59 months**

Donors

Russian Federation, Republic of Armenia and Israel

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