



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# SCHOOL FEEDING

## WFP Myanmar

### Going to School in Myanmar

Education is one of the core values in Myanmar society. However, many socio-economic factors continue to impede equitable access to various forms of education for a large portion of the population. Poverty is a major barrier to children's access to basic education, especially in rural areas. According to the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021, only 80.5 percent of children completed primary education in the 2014-2015 academic year. Net primary school completion rates are 79 percent among the wealthiest and only 31 percent among the poorest households.

### The Case for School Feeding

Supplementing schoolchildren's daily nutritional intake increases school enrolment and learning achievements, as well as attendance, graduation, and retention rates, ensuring that more children start and finish their primary education. The availability of a meal at school encourages parents to send their children to school rather than keeping them at home to work.

Schools are also an ideal platform to reach children at important stages in the lifecycle. Interventions at schools can be integrated with health messages and health promotion, and can be used to improve the daily dietary diversity of nutritionally vulnerable groups, especially in places where nutritious food is unaffordable or not readily available.

WFP's Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition in Myanmar recommends the expansion of school feeding programmes with the local sourcing of food and the inclusion of nutrition education in the school curriculum, complemented by activities such as school gardening. It notes that school-based nutrition education is an effective means of informing households about healthy food.

Different approaches to school feeding serve different purposes. The provision of high energy biscuits (HEBs) addresses short-term hunger while school meals and cash-based transfers work as social protection and give children the energy to focus and learn. Children with better nutritional and micronutrient status have improved health and ability to succeed in school.

### Feeding School Children in Myanmar

In Myanmar, the Government (before the 1 February 2021 military takeover) and WFP have been the only actors providing school feeding assistance to primary schools and some early childhood care development centres across the country. WFP's school feeding programme provides fortified HEB and onsite school meals throughout the entire school year for schoolchildren in 11 out of 14 states and regions in Myanmar.

Beginning in 1996, WFP provided schoolchildren with monthly take-home rations of rice. In 2012, WFP shifted to a more child-centred approach using on-site feeding with HEB while piloting school meals in Magway Region, Kachin State and Wa Self-Administered Division in 2017.



WFP need-based budget 2018-2022  
US\$ 75 million

### School Feeding Programme in 2019\*

| Assistance           | Schools      | Students       |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| High Energy Biscuits | 3,800        | 323,000        |
| School Meals         | 400          | 34,000         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>4,200</b> | <b>357,000</b> |

\*implemented in 11 out of 14 states/regions

## HEBs to School Meals

In line with national strategies, including the National Social Protection Strategic Plan, Multi-sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) and National Comprehensive School Health Strategic Plan, WFP is gradually shifting from HEBs to school meals, reflecting a more nutrition sensitive approach and encouraging better community participation and initiative among parents.

WFP's School Feeding Programme aims not only to increase enrollment and attendance rates and to reduce drop-out rates, but also to minimise malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. The programme couples the HEBs/school meals with education on health and hygiene practices, teaching children as well as teachers, parents and cooks about the importance of hand washing, sanitation and nutrition sensitive education.

School meals also bring students, parents and teachers together to cooperate for the education of the community. School meal management committees, composed of parents, teachers and local elders, are active in collaborating and coming up with creative solutions in managing the meal preparation activities. The committees invest their time, contributing meal ingredients and managing school gardens which provide fresh produce for school meals. WFP supports the establishment of school gardens and school kitchens through its community asset creation and livelihood programme, which provides food or cash for community members participating in the construction.

## Transitioning to the Nationally-Owned School Feeding Programme

In 2017, WFP supported the Ministry of Education in conducting Systems Approach for Better Educational Results (SABER). SABER is a tool developed by WFP and the World Bank that focuses on assessing the principles and procedures of school feeding programmes, which allows governments to measure progress against clearly defined goals and standards. The SABER assessment indicated that Myanmar's school feeding programme was in an emerging status as evaluated in the areas of policy framework, financial and institutional capacity and community participation. Building on this, Myanmar included school feeding in its MS-NPAN. Furthermore, through a multi-sectoral technical coordination group, WFP supported the development of strategic guidelines to pave the way for a nationally owned school meals programme.

In order to support the Government in realizing Myanmar's first ever nationally-owned programme, WFP also provided the necessary support in strengthening the capacity of relevant government officials, including through a study tour to WFP's Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil.

The 2021 political crisis has halted WFP's collaboration with the Government. However, WFP continues to run the programme where possible.

**Photo:** Parents and community contribute to successful school meals at a primary school in Magwe Region @WFP/Htet Oo Linn

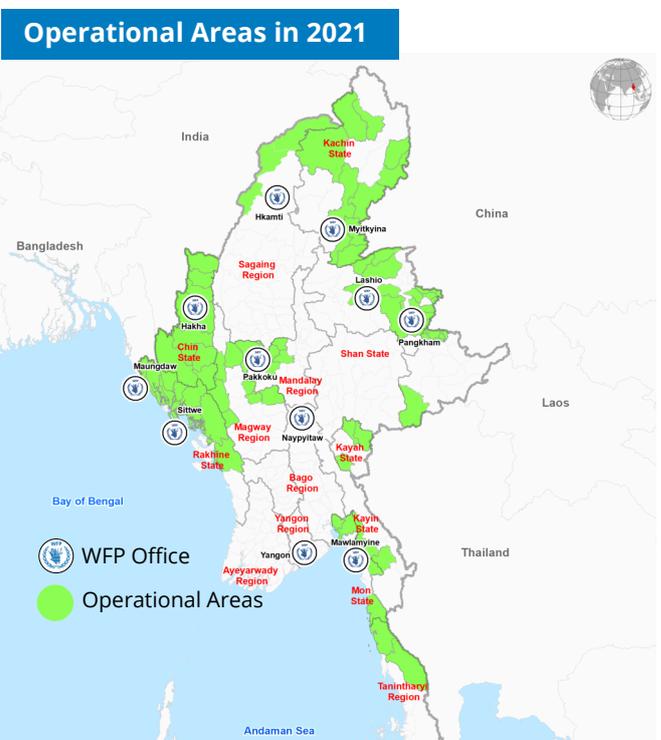
## COVID-19 Response

Following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar, the Government ordered the closure of all schools in August 2020 as part of its effort to contain the virus. In lieu of school meals during school closures due to COVID-19, WFP began distributing HEBs and cash assistance to over 190,000 schoolchildren in 11 states/regions across Myanmar, starting in July 2020. With cash assistance, each student receives up to MMK 8,000 (USD 5.70) per month, in order to help meet their nutritional requirements.

## The Road Ahead

Following the 1 February 2021 military takeover, WFP's approach to school feeding has shifted, with an emphasis on conflict-sensitivity and a do-no-harm approach, while ensuring young children continue to receive the support from WFP. The ultimate goal of WFP's School Feeding Strategic Plan is to advance Myanmar's school feeding into a well-established national programme.

In areas where feasible such as Naga and Wa regions, WFP will continue the shift to school meals encouraging the use of locally sourced produce in cooked meals. Given the new operational context following the military takeover in February 2021, WFP is also exploring innovative solutions such as take-home rations and cash-based transfers to ensure the school feeding programme continues to support children in schools in most food-insecure parts of the country.



## Donor Partners

Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, private donors including Japan Association for WFP, United States of America