



Two Minutes on School Feeding

About School Feeding

Making sure children are healthy and well-nourished while in school is crucial to their ability to learn and thrive. School feeding as part of an integrated school health and nutrition package supports children to become better learners in school and to improve their overall wellbeing. Very simply: sick children cannot attend school, and hungry children cannot learn. WFP understands school feeding as the provision of meals, snacks or take-home incentives through schools conditional upon the attendance of children:-

In-School Meals and Snacks: Children are provided with breakfast, lunch or both, while in school. Meals are either prepared at the school, in the community or are delivered from centralised kitchens. Some programmes provide complete meals, while others provide fortified foods such as rice or nutritious snacks, high-energy biscuits or date bars. As often as possible, food is procured locally.

Take-home Incentives: Families receive food and/or cash rations on the condition that their children attend school regularly. In-school meals, combined with these transfers, help to lower drop-out rates and bring more out-of-school children into the classroom.

The need for School Feeding

School meals are an essential safety net which helps to ensure that every child has access to education, health and nutrition. In the fight against hunger, school meals are a sound investment in the next generation and a country's human capital - thus improving their future economic growth and development prospects.

For the poorest students, enrolling in school, attending regularly and learning is often made more difficult by illness, hunger and malnutrition. In many parts of the world, children from vulnerable families are often pulled out of school when they are needed to work at home. When girls are out of school, they are more vulnerable to forced marriage, early pregnancy and gender-based violence. For these children and their families, a daily meal or snack can be a strong incentive for families to keep their children, especially girls, in school.

The Multiple Benefits of School Feeding

Studies show there is a US\$3-10 of economic return for every US\$1 invested in school meals programmes,

owing to improved health, education and productivity. With only US\$0.25, a child can have one school meal. It is clear that school feeding programmes are most beneficial when they apply a comprehensive, integrated and multisectoral approach that is tailored to address specific contextual needs of children. School feeding programmes yield high returns in four important areas:-

Education and learning: School feeding programmes promote education by removing barriers to accessing classrooms and learning. Research shows that children and adolescents need integrated health and nutrition packages of support for their development, and school feeding is recognised as an effective cost intervention of this package. A daily meal at school allows children to focus and helps increase enrolment and attendance, promotes retention rates and improves cognitive abilities. In areas with high numbers of out-of-school children and where there are prevalent barriers to education, including child labour, early marriage, or gender inequalities, school feeding programmes may be tailored to target specific groups of children (e.g., adolescent girls, children from marginalised communities etc.).

Nutrition and health: In vulnerable and marginalised communities, nutrition-sensitive school feeding can offer children a regular source of nutrients that are essential for their mental and physical development. WFP strives to include fortified and fresh foods to ensure meals are as nutritious as possible. When school meals are combined with deworming and micronutrient fortification, the effects of such investments are multiplied. Moreover, for the growing number of countries with the double burden of malnutrition (undernutrition and emerging obesity problems), well-designed school meals can help set children on the path towards healthier diets and behaviours.

Social protection and safety nets: School feeding is one of the most common safety nets, providing the daily support and stability that vulnerable families and children need. This is because school feeding reaches into the heart of poor communities and benefits the children directly. The food provided is seen by families as having real value, often substituting for around 10 percent of the family income for every child fed throughout the year. For families with several children, that can mean substantial savings, which can help break the inter-generational cycle of hunger and poverty that affects the world's most vulnerable areas, contributing to improving their livelihood prospects by helping children become healthy and productive adults.

World Food Programme **Two Minutes on School Feeding**

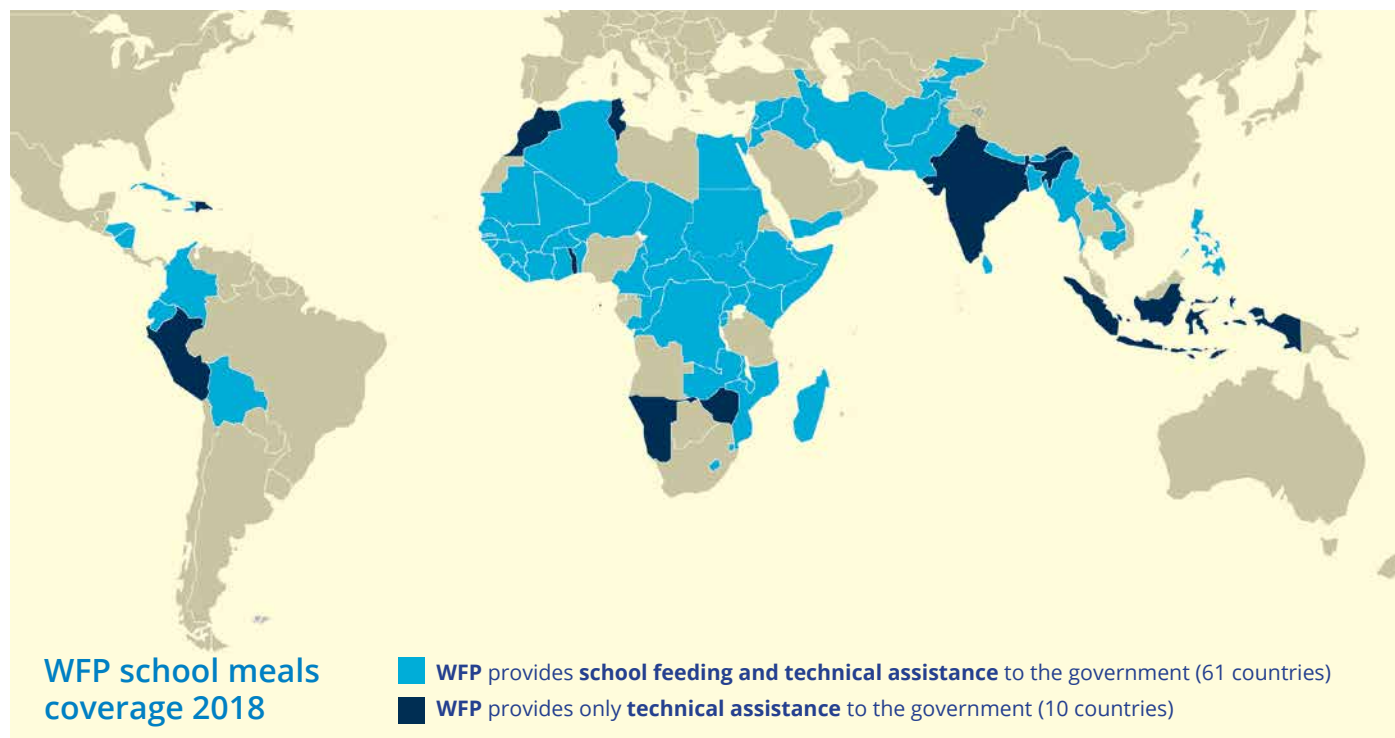
Local economies and agriculture: Through home-grown school feeding approaches, food is sourced directly from smallholder farmers and local traders. Buying local food creates stable markets, boosts local agriculture, impacts rural transformation and strengthens local food systems, especially for smallholder farmers, most of whom are the poorest and most vulnerable whose children are beneficiaries of school feeding programmes. This injects money into the local rural economy and can stimulate income opportunities. WFP supports home-grown school meals programmes in 38 countries, and there is growing demand from national governments for technical assistance in this area.

Supports Children in Emergency Situations: School meals also help keep children in school during emergencies or protracted crises, maintaining their sense of normalcy, stability, hope and ensuring a generation does not miss out on education. In the last 50 years, WFP has scaled-up school meals programmes in more than 40 countries in response to armed conflict, natural disasters and food and financial crises. Of the total children participating under a WFP-supported school feeding programme in 2018, 3.4 million received school meals in humanitarian emergency settings affected by conflict or natural disasters.

A global call to action

WFP and partners estimate that the needs of 73 million of the most vulnerable schoolchildren are not being met with school feeding. That is 73 million children aged between 5 and 12 years old who are missing out on the opportunity to grow and prosper. These are children living in 58 low- and middle-income countries, in fragile settings, in the poorest households and areas with a high prevalence of stunting and anaemia. Hence, there is a great need to provide these children with an integrated health and nutrition package of support to ensure that they have adequate health and nutrition to stay and succeed in school.

WFP's Presence



WFP calls for governments and partners to join in a new multi-sectoral, multi-actor response to an issue which contributes to achieving at least eight of the Sustainable Development Goals related to poverty (SDG1), hunger (SDG2), health (SDG3), education (SDG4) gender equality (SDG5), economic growth (SDG8), reduced inequalities (SDG10) and strengthened partnerships (SDG17).

WFP's work on School Feeding

WFP has six decades of experience supporting school feeding and a trajectory of working with more than 100 countries to set up sustainable national school feeding programmes. In 2018, WFP provided meals, snacks or take-home rations in the form of food or cash-based transfers to 16.4 million children in 61 countries and in 64,000 schools, of which 51 per cent were girls. 3.4 million of these children received school feeding in humanitarian emergency settings affected by conflict or natural disasters. WFP also built the capacities of 65 governments, which led to improved national school feeding programmes for another 39 million children. Currently, there are school feeding programmes in 44 countries, which started with initial support from WFP, that are now institutionalised as large-scale nationally-run programmes.

WFP is working on a new 10-year strategy for school feeding, which will be launched in early 2020. With this strategy, WFP reaffirms its commitment to support governments to reach these 73 million primary school children in need of school feeding. WFP's strategy is intended to make school feeding programmes part and parcel of packages of support to ensure nutrition, education and health of school children. For WFP, it is especially important to ensure that the most vulnerable children get the support they need. To reach this vision, WFP will work jointly with governments and partners to put in place an integrated and multisectoral approach and a new context-specific implementation framework to scale up and improve school feeding programmes around the world.