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A CHANCE FOR EVERY SCHOOLCHILD

Partnering to scale up School Health
and Nutrition for Human Capital



Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

The Importance of Investing in the Health and Nutrition of Schoolchildren and Adolescents

Healthy and well-nourished schoolchildren learn better. Healthy children also have better chances to thrive and fulfil their potential as adults. Ensuring that girls and boys stay in school and are able and ready to learn allows countries to develop their human capital and individuals to achieve their full potential in life. It strengthens community cohesion, stability and productivity, and helps make people and societies more resilient in a rapidly changing world.

Investments in human capital development of children are among the most effective and productive investments that countries can make. Failing to invest in a well-nourished, healthy and educated population undermines growth and economic development: low-income countries in Africa account for 25 out of the 30 countries with the lowest ranking in the World Bank Human Capital Index. For many of these countries, underinvestment in human capital leads to a loss of economic potential ranging from 50 to 70 percent in the long term. Africa's Human Capital Index puts the region at 40 percent of its potential. Its gross domestic product (GDP) could be 2.5 times higher if the benchmarks for health and education were achieved.

The world has made great strides in improving access to education, but learning remains suboptimal and more investment in high quality education is needed. The world is failing its schoolchildren in other important ways that constrain learning. In low- and middle-income countries, about 300 million schoolchildren have anaemia, causing them to lose some six IQ points per child; and about 73 million schoolchildren in low-income countries go to school hungry. These conditions translate into the equivalent of between 200 million and 500 million schooldays lost to ill health each year.

Current approaches to investing in a nation's children are insufficient. While low- and lower-middle income countries invest some USD 210 billion annually in providing basic education for their children (infrastructure, teachers, curriculum), they only invest about USD 1.4 billion to 5.5 billion in ensuring the children have the health and nutrition to allow them to learn: we invest in learning, but not in the learner. There is a growing consensus that there is a need to fix this mismatch. Very simply: sick children cannot attend school and hungry children cannot learn.

World Food Programme (WFP) will champion this neglected issue. In this strategy WFP lays out how it will advocate globally, and work in partnership, to address gaps in guaranteeing a proper school health and nutrition response for children in schools. In many cases WFP may not be the lead agency in tackling specific challenges, but by working with other agencies to shed light on the issue of school health and nutrition and convening different actors, it will help find solutions to the challenges identified. WFP will do this by leveraging its six decades of experience supporting school health and nutrition, its reach and knowledge of the poorest and hardest to reach populations, and its trajectory of working with more than 100 countries on sustainable national school feeding programmes.

This document also explains the new approach to school feeding adopted by WFP, as a pillar of an integrated school health and nutrition response. A key element of this new approach is to transform school feeding into a major driver of a climate change responsive approach to feeding children, for example by reducing the length of supply chains and adopting a zero-tolerance response to waste. It lays out for governments, partners and WFP staff worldwide what to expect from WFP in the next ten years, what its priorities and roles will be, and how it plans to change its way of working to provide more and better support to governments and children.

This strategy presents a broad call to action and vision and a focused operational approach. It asks governments and partners to join in a new multisectoral, multi-actor response that 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).



An Effective Global Response: An Integrated and Multisectoral Approach to School Health and Nutrition

An integrated package of support to schoolchildren and adolescents is needed, at scale. It is important that growing children are fully supported by good health and nutrition during the first 1,000 days of their development, the critical window from conception to 2 years of age. That has been the development focus for the last decade, but we now know that is not enough. If the early gains are to be sustained, and children are to achieve their full potential as adults, then they need to maintain good health and nutrition throughout the vulnerable periods of development that continue through to the early twenties: the first 8,000 days of life. Most importantly, good health and nutrition need to be sustained when children are being educated during school age and adolescence. This is an investment that is necessary for all children and has its greatest returns for the most deprived children and for girls.

WFP estimates that some 305 million children in low- and middle-income countries, about half of all those enrolled, are fed at school every day. Many of these children receive other elements of an integrated package of school health and nutrition, which would likely include deworming, supplementation, vaccination, vision screening, malaria control, menstrual hygiene management, nutrition education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and oral health. But these interventions rarely reach the poorest children who need them the most. WFP estimates that about 73 million primary schoolchildren living in extreme poverty in 60 countries do not have access to national school feeding programmes and are most likely not receiving most of the other essential school health interventions.

A global effort to support governments to reach these 73 million primary schoolchildren is a priority, and one which makes good economic sense. Providing these children with at least one meal a day would have an additional cost of around USD 4.6 billion annually, adding the essential school health package would increase the cost to USD 5.8 billion annually, which represents some 2.5 percent of the current annual investment in primary education. The return on this investment is a benefit–cost ratio estimated at around USD 20 for every dollar invested, and which leverages the greater than USD 210 billion a year investment in learning.

The multiple returns to a school feeding and school health package mean that they can be used as strategic interventions to both mitigate crises and support national development. In times of stability, school feeding promotes education, health and nutrition – in other words, it builds human capital. If linked to local agriculture, additional economic and social benefits can be extended to schoolchildren’s households and their communities.

In hard times, school feeding programmes can rapidly expand their role as a social safety net, ensuring food is quickly and directly available for the communities that need help the most. School feeding programmes supply about 10 percent of household expenditure for each child who participates, providing a substantial resource transfer to the poorest households and serving as an effective safety net. The programmes reach into the heart of poor communities and benefit needy children and communities directly in ways that cash alone cannot. They act as an entry point for other sectoral interventions to reach children and provide a multisectoral platform that bridges both humanitarian and development actions. This focused support during development is essential for all children, and in the poorest and most deprived communities is a game-changer for girls.

WFP's Strategic Response

Responding to the Decade of Action (2020 – 2030), WFP will work with governments and partners to jointly ensure that all primary schoolchildren have access to good quality meals in school, accompanied by a broader integrated package of health and nutrition services. WFP will take a context-specific approach and adapt its roles to the particular country situation, in partnerships with other important players, including governments, United Nations agencies, the private sector, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and focus specifically on ensuring that the 73 million children living in extreme poverty in 60 countries are reached.

WFP will implement this through a context-specific approach:

1. **CONTEXT 1: Crisis or humanitarian settings:**

30 countries have been identified under this category with around 40 million children in need of school feeding.

ROLE 1: WFP will scale up by providing operational support. WFP will scale up its coverage and operate programmes in countries that do not have the capacity to ensure vulnerable children are covered. Currently WFP reaches 10 million children in 27 countries under this category.

TARGET: Increase coverage to 35 million children in 30 countries by 2030 and support governments to reach the remaining 5 million children in need. The organization will aim to raise USD 1.75 billion annually to support this scale up and will progressively increase the capacity of implementation on the ground.

WFP's target for the next ten years

1. Provide school feeding to **35 million children in 30 of the most fragile and low-income countries.** WFP will raise USD 1.75 billion annually to cover the cost of feeding these children.
2. Work with national governments of the **remaining 30 stable, low- and middle-income countries to reach 38 million children** (contexts 2 and 3) by transitioning and scaling up nationally owned programmes. WFP will raise USD 20 million to provide technical assistance and secure transitional funding for operations.

2. **CONTEXT 2: Stable low-income and lower-middle-income countries:** 20 countries have been identified under this category with around 29 million children in need of school feeding.

ROLE 2: WFP will support the transition and scale up of national programmes. WFP will help to strengthen systems and provide technical assistance in countries that have emerging capacities and are working on improving the scale and quality of national programmes. During 2020 and 2021 WFP will engage with national governments to develop time-bound national targets and handover strategies, leading to a gradual decrease of WFP operational beneficiaries in the coming decade. WFP currently reaches 6 million children under this category.

TARGET: Successful hand over of school feeding programmes in 20 countries by 2030. The organization will aim to raise USD 14 million annually to support capacity strengthening activities. Additionally, since transitions will happen progressively in the next ten years, WFP will need to secure funding to cover the children currently under its care, which will progressively decrease.

3. **CONTEXT 3: Middle-income countries:** ten countries have been identified under this category with around 4 million children in need of school feeding.

ROLE 3: WFP will support the consolidation and strengthening of national programmes. In these countries, where the transition has already happened, WFP's assistance has been instrumental in supporting the reform and strengthening of national school feeding programmes. WFP will continue to work with governments to ensure the children in need are integrated in national programmes. It will support governments to innovate and test new approaches. WFP currently reaches 1 million children under this category.

TARGET: Successfully hand over school feeding programmes in all ten countries by 2030. The organization will aim to raise USD 6 million annually to support capacity strengthening activities.



At the corporate level, WFP will put in place four work streams to support the implementation of this strategy.



WORK STREAM 1 – Sharing knowledge and best practice globally: Drawing from decades of engagement in school feeding, WFP will document and share global lessons learned, good practices, standards and norms more

effectively to inform national decision making and contribute to high quality programming. A research consortium managed by an academic partner, not by WFP, will be established to ensure evidence work is credible and rigorous. The consortium will set a research agenda for school feeding with partners for the next ten years, based on a mapping of learning needs, to ensure that global gaps in the knowledge base are being filled. WFP will innovate to foster a climate change responsive approach to school feeding.



WORK STREAM 2 – Increasing the investment in school feeding: a new financing model: A new financing model that differentiates between contexts is needed.

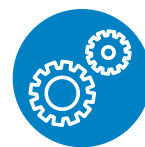
Funding to support low-income and fragile countries with their programmes given their limited fiscal capacity must be increased. In middle-income countries, governments need to move away from a reliance on actors such as WFP and NGOs, into different ways of financing their own national programmes, and WFP needs to identify sources of funding to provide technical assistance and to increase

capacity in a more comprehensive and sustainable way. WFP will work with partners to identify additional and innovative funding alternatives in these different contexts.



WORK STREAM 3 – Acting in partnership to improve and advocate for school health and nutrition: WFP will champion the issue of school health and nutrition globally and advocate for its prioritization in the next

decade of action towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It will work with partners to ensure that the additional elements of the essential integrated package for children, which are not part of the mandate or areas of expertise of WFP but are nevertheless crucial for children, are provided in an integrated way.



WORK STREAM 4 – Strengthening programmatic approaches in key areas: country demand for further guidance and support has been identified in the following areas, which WFP will develop with partners:

nutrition-sensitive approaches; girls' and adolescents' education and well-being; food systems and value chains; digital innovation; and the triple humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

What is New?

This strategy is aligned with and supports WFP's School Feeding Policy, which was approved by the Executive Board in 2013. With the implementation of this strategy, WFP will change the way it thinks. For the first time WFP is developing a framework based on the country context to guide the role of WFP and the support it provides in the field. With six decades of experience supporting school health and nutrition, the track record of WFP is well established, but there are no grounds for complacency: consultations for this strategy highlight that organizational learning and change are required if WFP is to be better equipped to meet the challenges ahead.

Three major changes are expected as this strategy is rolled out:

1. WFP will change the way it works and acts in partnership; sharpen its advocacy, convening and influencing capacities; and act as a catalyst and a facilitator of global, regional and country efforts on school health and nutrition.
2. WFP will change the way it works with governments, increasing the sustainability and institutionalization of its efforts through a better understanding of national priorities and challenges, and an approach to strengthening national systems and plans.
3. WFP will change the way it delivers school feeding, ensuring better integration, coherence and quality of programme delivery, a stronger focus on the roles of diet and life style on obesity as well as undernutrition, and an innovative approach to responding to climate change.

This strategy is built on a theory of change, which will guide monitoring efforts and which will create centralized evaluations to measure progress. At the global, regional and country level, key performance indicators will be developed for all the strategy work streams and actions identifying annual targets, as well as specific targets for 2025 and 2030. Targets will be reviewed annually to ensure adequate responsiveness to implementation realities and country context as the role of WFP evolves and changes within each country.

WFP has undertaken an analysis of internal monitoring systems and has identified the major system bottlenecks. Based on these findings, WFP is developing new approaches to appropriately track planned and actual resources invested in school feeding and link them to results. A plan is being defined to address these challenges progressively in the first three years of the strategy.

In the spirit of United Nations Reform, WFP commits to a new partnership approach in which its contributions to school feeding efforts are part of an integrated package of support to children and adolescents. Through a coalition of partners, the lives of millions of children can be improved, making this a substantive contribution to ending child hunger and poverty, ensuring that every child learns and thrives and achieving the SDGs by 2030.



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