



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

IMPACT OF SCHOOL MEALS IN JORDAN ON KITCHEN WORKERS AND HOUSEHOLDS

Jordan's National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) is part of the National School Feeding Strategy (2021-2025) launched by the Government of Jordan in 2021. Every day, the NSFP provides over 430,000 students from 2,314 schools in vulnerable areas across the country with centrally procured date bars or high-protein biscuits.

The Government of Jordan asked the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Jordan Country Office to pilot an alternative school feeding model, which aims to increase children's nutritional diversity through healthier meals and foster socioeconomic development in vulnerable areas¹ by creating jobs for women.

In partnership with the Royal Health Awareness Society (RHAS), the new model introduces two important features: moving towards healthier school meals distribution, and shifting from centralized to decentralized procurement of school meals. Under this model, community-based organizations (CBOs) run kitchen facilities to deliver healthier meals to children.

Each kitchen employs 15-30 local women to assemble and package meals for children consisting of a cheese-filled pastry accompanied by one piece of fruit and one vegetable. This programme component is particularly important in Jordan, a middle-income country with low female labour force participation (14%, World Development Indicators 2024).

WFP in partnership with the Government of Jordan and the World Bank conducted a rigorous impact evaluation using a randomized controlled trial to examine the effects of the new school-meals delivery model within Jordan's National School Feeding Programme.

¹ Areas where at least 25 percent of the population fall below the poverty line.

This impact evaluation analyses the impacts of the change in the procurement model on school outcomes and kitchen workers' employment opportunities, income, and other socioeconomic outcomes.

KEY EVIDENCE

Women who receive a job offer are significantly more likely to remain employed during the intervention period compared to those who don't. **Their income more than triples**, and their household income increases by a third. **Savings and non-food expenditures** also increase in households where women receive job offers.

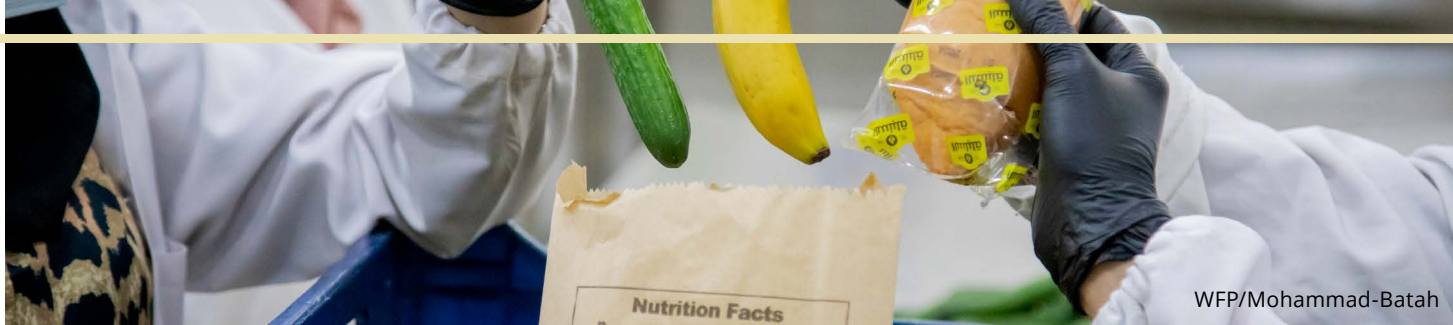
Workers report marginally **higher life satisfaction and male household members report less restrictive attitudes** towards women earning more than their husbands. No short-term impacts were found on other outcomes such as bargaining power, social cohesion, food consumption and coping strategies.

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES IMPACT EVALUATION WINDOW

School-based programmes are one of the most extensive social safety nets worldwide. There is a growing need for more evidence to inform the trade-offs in school-based programmes' designs and implementations and understand how they can play an important role as a social safety net protecting boys and girls during shocks.

In 2021, the [World Food Programme](#), in partnership with the [World Bank](#), launched the [School-based Programmes Impact Evaluation Window](#) to generate a portfolio of impact evaluation evidence to inform policy decisions and programmes. Since then, five experimental impact evaluations have started in The Gambia, Jordan, Burundi, Guatemala and Malawi.

November 2024



KEY FINDINGS

1 What is the impact of formal wage employment outside the household on women's social and economic empowerment?



The impact evaluation results show significant positive impacts on women's economic empowerment.

Women with a job offer are five times more likely to be employed whether in community-based kitchens or other jobs, compared to those who did not receive a job offer (69 percent compared to 15 percent).

The offer of formal wage employment marginally increases women's desire to stay in the labour force (78 percent compared to 71 percent).

There were notable increases in applicant and household income. The monthly income of eligible applicants with job offers more than tripled compared to those without job offers (176 JOD compared to 52 JOD) and the monthly household income of eligible applicants rose by a third (456 JOD compared to 340 JOD).

When comparing employed to not-employed applicants, individual income is more than five times higher, and household income is more than 1.5 times higher.

In terms of social empowerment, the impact evaluation detects small but significant improvements in women's life satisfaction. Other psychosocial outcomes do not appear to be affected. Applicants with job offers report higher satisfaction with life, with a score of 21.67 that is higher than the score of the comparison group of 20.81, and the difference being significant at the 10 percent level.

Marginal improvements were noted in male household members' attitudes towards women's income. However, there was no significant impact on intra-household decision-making.

2 Does women's formal wage employment outside the household impact households' consumption and food security?



Households with job offers are more likely to save (28 percent compared to 23 percent), save about 50 percent more (5.5 JOD compared to 3.7 JOD) and increase non-food spending by about 10 percent. However, job offers did not seem to affect food consumption, food expenditure per capita and food security.

3 Does women's employment in community-based kitchens impact their trust and social cohesion in the communities in which the kitchens are based?



There are no indications that job offers for kitchen employment impact women's social capital and trust in the community.

4 Are there heterogeneous impacts of formal wage employment outside the household on women?



Heterogeneity analysis based on women's baseline employment, marital status, agency, and gender norms was implemented, but no clear patterns were detected.

5 What are women's and men's preferences for women's wage employment arrangements in Jordan?



Women value longer contracts and transport services, while mixed-gender workplaces are viewed unfavourably. For men, the gender composition of the workplace is the most important characteristic of a job offer, while salary does not seem to be of particular importance for men or women.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The impact evaluation of the WFP's healthy school meals programme in Jordan finds positive impacts on both school children (see companion brief) and kitchen workers preparing the healthy meals, after two semesters. Considering the favourable effects observed on children, there is a compelling case for **scaling up the provision of healthier meals**. The following considerations are based on the above impact evaluation findings from Jordan and can support any future scale-up of the healthy meals model.

1 SIMPLIFY HEALTH MEALS MODELS AND EVALUATE THEIR COST-EFFECTIVENESS TO ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY.

Drawing lessons from experiences in other countries and adapting effective strategies will enhance the programme's long-term viability. This entails comparing cost-benefit ratios, automating tracking and monitoring data collection as much as feasible, as well as simplifying procurement and delivering processes to maximize efficiency.

2 EXPLORE THE IMPACT ON TEACHERS.

Recognizing that children in healthy meal model schools are less likely to bring money to school in a context where the cafeteria is run as a profit-making enterprise by teachers, the programme may want to consider the impact on teachers.

Supporting teachers by actively mitigating any negative consequences arising from a reduction in children bringing money to schools, could foster a positive teaching environment.

3 ENHANCE JOB ACCESSIBILITY FOR WOMEN IN POVERTY-POCKETS AREAS.

Offering transportation services as part of employment contracts could help overcome mobility challenges. Additionally, targeted community engagement initiatives could help address cultural barriers, making job opportunities more accessible and empowering for women.

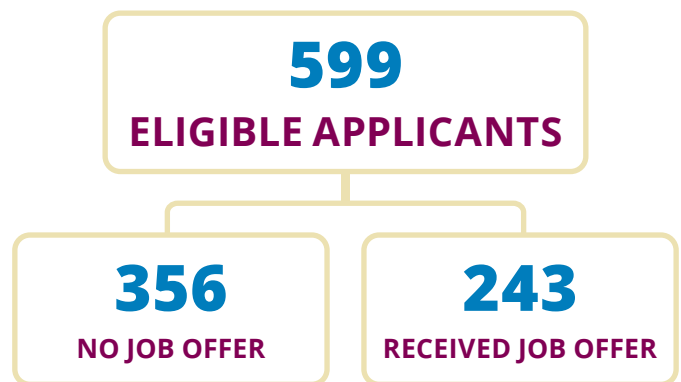


ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

With an estimated 418 million children currently benefiting globally, school meals are one of the most widespread social safety nets in the world, encouraging the poorest families to send their children to school. Once in the classroom, school meals ensure children are well-nourished and ready to learn. Therefore, school meal programmes are crucial for promoting children's health, nutrition, education, and learning. At the same time, with a global annual investment of USD 48 billion in school meal programmes, school meals are increasingly recognised as a key investment to boost demand for locally produced food, create local jobs, and promote more sustainable food systems. However, limited empirical evidence exists on how best to design these programmes, and understand their effects on the local economy. The WFP Office of Evaluation, in partnership with the World Bank, launched the [School-based Programmes window](#) in 2021 to generate new evidence in school feeding.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation uses a randomised control trial (RCT) design to assess the impact on the local economy of women's employment in community kitchens that prepare healthy school meals. The treatment group for kitchen workers consists of 243 eligible female applicants who are offered employment in the kitchen, while the control group consists of 356 eligible female applicants who are not offered employment in the kitchen due solely to the limited number of jobs available. A discrete choice experiment (DCE) was added into the worker endline survey to answer questions on women's and men's preferences for women's wage employment arrangements outside of the household in Jordan. Respondents were presented with hypothetical job profiles and asked to state their preferred option for employment. Profiles consisted of several attributes and levels. Job profiles were combined to form choice sets of two profiles in each set, from which participants were asked to select their preferred profile. Data collected for assessing the impact of women's employment in kitchens includes monitoring data, baseline surveys (August 2022), two high-frequency surveys (December 2022 and March 2023), and an endline survey (May 2023). The endline survey included a discrete choice experiment to understand employment preferences.



WFP EVALUATION in partnership with



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