



Two Minutes on School Feeding

What is School Feeding?

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 to the classroom.

Why 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. For this reason, WFP provided meals, snacks or take-home food to 18.3 million children in 71 countries in 2017.

Children from vulnerable families are often pulled out of school when they are needed to work at home, or to be married. A daily meal or snack can be a strong incentive for families to keep sending their children to school.

WFP supports countries in developing sustainable government-owned programmes. WFP engages in school meals policy dialogue, provides technical assistance and supports knowledge exchange between countries. In 2017, WFP supported 65 governments to enhance the quality and efficiency of their national programmes, which resulted in enhanced school meals programmes for an additional 39 million children.

WFP works through its Centres of Excellence to facilitate South-South Cooperation and exchange of governments' experiences. To ensure that programmes are cost-effective and context-specific, WFP's school meals are built on solid analysis, considering the efficiency of different implementation models, including providing vouchers or cash, and the best ways of reaching the children who will benefit.

The Benefits of School Feeding

Studies show that every US\$1 invested in school meals programmes brings a US\$3-10 economic return from improved health, education and productivity.

Just US\$0.25 will offer a child one school meal.

School Feeding Programmes are beneficial in many ways and are tailored to address specific contextual needs.

Safety Nets and Social Protection: School meals help families support their children's education while protecting their food security. They help break the inter-generational cycle of hunger and poverty that affects the world's most vulnerable areas by helping children become healthy and productive adults. School Feeding programmes can specifically target children who are especially in need, such as those affected by HIV/AIDS, orphans, disabled children and former child soldiers.

Education: School meals and conditional food and cash transfers promote education by removing barriers to accessing a classroom and learning. A daily meal at school allows children to focus on their studies rather than their stomachs and helps increase enrolment and attendance, promotes graduation rates and improves cognitive abilities. In areas where there is a high population of out-of-school children, prevalent use of child labour or a gender gap in key education-related areas, programmes may be tailored to target specific groups of children.

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School meals also help keep children in school during emergencies or protracted crises, maintaining their sense of stability 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.

Nutrition: In poor countries, a WFP-supported school meal is often the only regular meal a child receives. WFP uses nutrition-sensitive planning and strives to include fresh foods to make meals as nutritious as possible. Without them, hunger and micronutrient deficiencies can cause irreversible damage to their growing bodies. When school meals are combined with deworming and micronutrient fortification, the effects of that investment are multiplied. This is especially so when they are tailored to specific nutritional needs, such as those for adolescent girls or children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Local agriculture: Linking small-scale farmers to school meals programmes helps support rural economies, making programmes more sustainable. WFP supports home-grown school meals programmes in 46 countries, and more governments are interested. In these countries, WFP works with farmers and governments to increase their capacities.

All these outcomes translate into an increase in human capital and community resilience; confirming the potential of School Feeding Programmes as a valuable investment.



WFP's Presence

WFP has supported School Feeding Programmes since 1963. In 2017, WFP directly provided school meals to 18.3 million children, including take-home food for 1.1 million children in 71 countries and in 70,800 schools.

Of these children, 1.7 million received school meals in emergency contexts. WFP also provided technical assistance to government-led programmes in 65 countries, supporting an additional 39 million children.

