



Highlights

- Following the parliamentary elections in April, all ministers resigned from their posts on the 18th of May. Ten ministers have been reappointed, two of which WFP liaises with directly. These include the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of International Economic Integration and Reforms, who also serves as the Vice Prime Minister.
- Despite ongoing ceasefire violations at the border of Tavush province, school meals operations in Armenia remain uninterrupted and unaffected.
- WFP met with the Minister of Education and Science His Excellency Mr. Levon Mkrtchyan to discuss ongoing school meals operations in Armenia and future collaboration.

WFP Assistance

Sustainable School Feeding in Armenia	Total Requirements (in USD)	Total Received (in USD)	6 Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)*
DEV 200128 (2010 - 2017)	30.3 m	29.1 m (96%)	-

*June - November 2017

Launched in 2010, WFP's School Meals Development Project provides school meals in food insecure areas with a two-fold objective: 1) to support the food security and education of children through school meals, and 2) to support the Government of Armenia in developing and implementing a sustainable, cost effective and nutrition sensitive national school meals programme.

Since September 2015, the programme has provided meals to 81,500 primary school children, and distributed take-home entitlements to 1,700 kitchen helpers involved in the daily preparation of school meals. Of these, the Government is funding the costs for 21,500 primary school children in three provinces (Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Ararat), where the gradual shift from a biscuit and juice snack modality to more nutritious hot meals increased from zero to 45 percent in 2015 and to 87.7 percent by January 2017. Compared to a snack modality, hot feeding provides a number of health benefits, including nutrition-sensitive diet diversity, proportion of daily protein and fat requirements, as well as culturally accepted meals attracting children for appropriate consumption. For the remaining 60,000 children under WFP-administered provinces, the project provides diversified hot meals to all children engaged from grades 0-4. With the technical support of WFP's cooperating partner, Social and Industrial Food Services Institute (SIFI), WFP pursues the objective of fostering government ownership of the national school meals programme through the gradual handover of the remaining seven provinces in the country.

By building partnerships to enable children to exercise their rights to nutrition, health and education, the project contributes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2 and 17, and is in line with the new WFP Strategic Plan

of 2017-2021. School meals is also aligned with the priorities of the 2014-2025 Armenia Development Strategy: human capital development and improvement of social protection.

According to 2016 [Country Gender Assessment](#) of Asian Development Bank, the extent to which men and women share the same equity in Armenia indicate limited progress in the last five years. Government policy related to gender equality has evolved from measures aimed at addressing women's issues to a more comprehensive view of disparities between women and men. Although the country has consistently scored high in equal access to education and positive health outcomes for women, this has been negated by a lack of progress in women's political empowerment and women's declining access to economic opportunities.

The school meals programme directly and indirectly addresses gender equality and women's economic empowerment through involving school headmasters, parent teacher associations (PTAs) and kitchen helpers represented by women in decision-making and the implementation processes. The PTAs, where 92 percent of participants are women, are encouraged to regularly mobilise resources and engage parents and communities in school feeding activities. They also participate in the planning and monitoring of food preparation in the schools. The programme provides opportunities for 1,700 women kitchen helpers to contribute to the food security of their households by receiving food entitlements intended for up to five family members. As reported by post-distribution focus group discussions, the women indicated increased levels of confidence and self-esteem by being employed in the programme through realizing their augmented potential outside the home.

In Numbers

60,000 primary school children reached

8,324 kitchen helpers assisted with family rations*

**People Assisted
May 2017**

53%



47%



*kitchen helpers received food entitlements calculated for five family members.

Main Photo

Credit: Mariah Young-Jones, WFP.
Caption: School meals programme in Armenia.



May 2017

Operational Updates

- Following the success of the transitional model to national ownership piloted in Tavush, WFP and the Government have agreed to replicate this model in the provinces of Shirak and Aragatsotn, which will be handed over in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The transitional model consists of the introduction of cash-based transfers (CBT), preceded by comprehensive school staff trainings on procurement, logistics, menu composition, nutrition, and financial management. This model also entails school infrastructure assessments, preceding the provision of kitchen equipment and renovation materials to schools, and further amplified by multiple partnerships to improve WASH conditions. In May, WFP completed school infrastructure assessments in all 118 primary schools in Aragatsotn province, in partnership with local education and food safety authorities and WFP's cooperating partner, SIFI. A similar assessment in Shirak province is scheduled for June.
- The second cash transfer payment to all 75 schools in Tavush province was completed during the third week of May. The CBT modality enables schools to buy 16 to 20 diverse commodities, providing school children with 32 percent of their daily caloric needs, and covering 41 and 46 percent of their daily requirements for protein and fat respectively. The shift to CBT increased the NVS to 6.49, therefore improving the overall micronutrient intake for the beneficiaries.

Challenges

- Several bordering schools in the province of Tavush have reported increased incidences of shooting near the villages of Chinari, Koti, Barekamavan, Baghanis, Aygepar, and Nerkin Karmir Aghbiur. Despite these circumstances, the school meals programme has remained uninterrupted and unaffected.

Partnerships

- WFP and FAO discussed potential collaboration on the food security strategy for Armenia and on their respective on-going projects. Though joint action with FAO to build school greenhouses in Armavir province will make fresh food further available in schools, WFP suggested that both agencies foster a comprehensive home grown school meals approach with the Government of Armenia in order to stimulate rural development and local economies. WFP also encouraged FAO's cooperation on the National Strategic Review on Zero Hunger. Furthermore, both UN agencies discussed the possibility to co-organise the World Food Day in October 2017.
- WFP met with the Minister of Education and Science to discuss the extension of the Development Project Action Plan on School Meals (DPAP) until the end of 2018 and how best to operationalize the newly created National School Feeding Foundation. The current DPAP agreement, which frames WFP's portfolio in Armenia, expires at the end of June. His Excellency, who reiterated his appreciation of WFP's work and willingness to pursue collaboration in Armenia, committed to endorsing the DPAP extension, which will allow WFP to continue its activities without pipeline breaks. Finding a sustainable funding solution was highlighted as the main obstacle in the face of the Foundation's functionality. Therefore, WFP will fund the Foundation's initial expenses through the end of 2018, in agreement with the Russian Federation.

Country Background & Strategy



Armenia is a landlocked country and highly vulnerable to external shock factors, including global economic downturn and conflicts. Border closures with neighbouring Turkey and Azerbaijan since Armenia's independence in 1991 have constrained economic development of the state. According to the latest [National Statistical Service](#) data, the poverty rate reached 29, 8 percent of the population in 2015.

WFP established its presence in Armenia in 1993 with an emergency operation. During 1999, the emergency operation was replaced with a protracted relief and recovery operation. Since 2010, the Programme has shifted to development assistance, through Development Project 200128 – 'Development of Sustainable School Feeding'. Aligned with the Government's priorities, WFP continues to support the ongoing development of a National sustainable school feeding programme.

Based on the [Comprehensive Food Security, Vulnerability and Nutrition Analysis \(CFSVNA\)](#) conducted in March 2016, WFP proposes to keep the focus on school meals, with a potential expansion to social protection programming around disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness. The results of National Zero Hunger Strategic Review, anticipated to be endorsed by the Government in July 2017, will further reshape the Country Strategic Plan of WFP.

Population: **2.97 million**

2016 Human Development Index:
84 out of 188

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **19% of children between 0-59 months**

Donors

Republic of Armenia, Israel, and Russian Federation

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