



ABOUT “LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE”

The UN World Food Programme has 45 years of experience in school feeding. This collection of good practices and lessons learned, *Learning from Experience*, has harvested existing knowledge on the topic, drawing from 134 evaluations, case studies, an ongoing consultation process and operational experience.

The study makes available institutional memory as a tool for practical use in the field. This work will serve as a guide and a building block for governments, WFP and NGO partners to design and implement high-quality, feasible, sustainable and cost-effective school feeding programmes.

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AFGHANISTAN TACKLING GENDER INEQUALITIES

COUNTRY OVERVIEW	
Children enrolled in primary school	4,319,000
Girls enrolled in primary school	36%
Gross enrolment ratio	101%
Repeaters (all grades)	16.3%
WFP ASSISTANCE In 2008	
Children receiving school meals	1,400,000
Boys receiving take-home rations	366,000
Girls receiving take-home rations	463,000
Vegetable oil distributed (mt)	16,000
Schools built or rehabilitated	25

OVERVIEW

The substantial increase in school enrolment rates since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 has been favoured by many factors: the social and political environment, the successful UNICEF-supported back-to-school campaign and the influx of returnees. Comparative enrolment by grades in general education indicates that there was an overall increase of 14 percent in school enrolment. However, the Gender Parity Index (girls to boys' enrolment) continues to remain very low, at 0.35. Cultural and traditional restrictions, together with lack of facilities like water and

sanitation, text books and the dire security situation contribute to this difficult situation for girls' education.

WFP's school feeding programme under protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 10427.0 addresses short-term hunger and provides incentives for increasing enrolment and attendance, with a special focus on girls and teachers (particularly women), and for imparting literacy and life skills to targeted participants.

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKBOX	
Sound alignment with national policy framework	√√
Stable funding and budgeting	
Evidence-based programme design	√√√
Strong institutional and implementation arrangements	√
Strong partnerships and inter-sector coordination	√√
Strong community participation and ownership	

GOOD PRACTICES

School feeding in the policy framework

- **Ensuring alignment with the national policy framework:** school feeding is mentioned in the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan (General Education, component 5, student services), currently under review. It is expected that school feeding will remain high on the government's agenda.

Staff training and capacity building

- **Partnering to build capacity:** in connection with school feeding, WFP established a project coordination unit in the Ministry of Education, seconded staff to the unit, trained ministry staff at the central and provincial levels in management of school feeding, school construction, data collection and data entry, and monitoring and evaluation. In support of the school deworming campaign, the Ministries of Education and Health, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and WFP jointly trained 20 regional and 28 provincial trainers from the ministries as mobile training teams. They subsequently trained 152 ministerial staff and 7,800 teachers.

Targeting

- **Addressing gender disparity through take-home rations:** WFP helped increase girls' enrolment and attendance rates by distributing a monthly ration of 3.7 litres of vegetable oil to girls, conditional upon a minimum attendance of 22 days per month. Oil is an appropriate food item for families: it is an important component of the local diet, with high nutritional value. This valuable commodity becomes even more essential before the winter, when prices increase significantly.

Defining modality, food basket and ration design

- **Piloting different approaches to test effectiveness:** before launching the school feeding programme in 2001, two approaches were tested: a take-home ration for students in 50 schools in Badakhshan and on-site meals with freshly baked bread in the rest of the country. Badakhshan was selected for take-home rations because preparing and distributing bread on a daily basis in such a remote area was difficult. Take-home wheat rations were good because the area has a wheat deficit and poor market access. When the two approaches were evaluated, the take-home school feeding pilot in Badakhshan was the more successful approach. The bakery-based school feeding did not work because of weak local physical infrastructure, community participation and management capacity. Teachers reported that bread distribution disturbed lessons. WFP agreed to distribute fortified biscuits and to limit take-home rations to remote and insecure areas.

LESSONS LEARNED

Funding arrangements

- **Planning for a full-fledged national school feeding programme:** in March 2008 the government had prepared, with WFP support, a government-owned nationwide, universal-coverage school feeding programme. The programme had a five-year duration, and was to cover up till 8.1 million beneficiaries in 2013 with an annual budget reaching US\$483 million in the same year. This amount is substantive when compared to the overall Education budget (US\$612 million in 2008¹). It is important to be realistic in planning for government programmes and start small and test new approaches with a view to eventual scale-up while maintaining the momentum and political will to increase its ownership of school feeding.

Staff training and capacity building

- **Fighting teacher deficit in rural areas:** parents are reluctant to allow their girls to be taught by a male teacher unless he is a respected religious leader (*Mullah*). Therefore girls' school enrolment depends on the supply of female teachers. The major problem of access to teacher training is in the rural areas: any incentive to upgrade the skills of the existing pool of female teachers will assist the enrolment and retention of female students in higher grades in rural areas. A targeted food incentive designed to increase teacher supply in geographic areas where there is an acute teacher deficit is being implemented in the current PRRO.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Ensuring the presence of both follow-up and control questions in surveys:** WFP's 2004 School Feeding Snapshot Survey provided evidence that school feeding influences students' performance. However, the survey contained no follow-up/control questions (pre-coded options or open questions) that could have elicited how the focus group reached their judgment. Future assessments should attempt to quantify "enhanced concentration" or "better results/performance".

¹ Afghanistan Ministry of Education, *National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan*, 1385-1389 (2006-2010).

Community involvement

- **Improving community participation:** community participation in school feeding is very low in Afghanistan and there is a need for sensitization and awareness of Parent Teacher Associations or School Management *Shuras* (Councils). Community involvement will be particularly important with the piloting of micronutrient powder in hot meals as an alternate to the school feeding programme which supplies dry rations of biscuits, wheat and oil.