



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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EL SALVADOR A SUCCESSFUL HANDOVER EXPERIENCE

COUNTRY OVERVIEW	
Children enrolled in primary school	1,035,000
Girls enrolled in primary school	48%
Out-of-school children	39,000
Gross enrolment ratio	114%
Survival rate to last grade	67%
Repeaters (all grades)	7.5%
PAE ASSISTANCE In 2008	
Beneficiaries	870,000
Coverage	100%
School assisted	4,100

OVERVIEW

In 2008, the school feeding programme in El Salvador was fully taken over by the government after 24 years of partnership with WFP. The programme started in 1984, during the civil conflict, reaching 300,000 students, 90 percent of school-age children in rural areas.

In 1997, six years after the signing of the peace accords, the government began to take over programme management responsibilities while WFP withdrew from departments not classified as most food-insecure.

By 2006, government allocations totalled US\$10 million, reaching 651,000 children in 3,500 schools (88 percent of rural primary schools and poor urban schools).

In 2008, the government achieved 100 percent coverage, coinciding with the planned date for the complete transfer of responsibilities to national institutions.

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 part of a wider multi-sector school health and nutrition initiative called *Escuela Saludable* (Healthy School). The programme is also in the National Education Sector Plan, in the National Government Plan and, most importantly, in the Ministry of Education's operational plans, which determine the budgetary requirements of the programme.

Funding arrangements

- **Finding interim funding solutions:** a national law passed in 2000 determined that the proceeds from the privatization of the national telecommunication company be put in a trust fund and that the interest earned would be allocated to social programmes such as school feeding. To date, the trust fund has generated about US\$32 million. In 2008, proceeds from the trust fund represented 30 percent of the government's budget for the programme.

Handover arrangements

El Salvador is an example of a successful handover process, which gradually increased the government capacity to finance and manage the programme¹. Several aspects constitute good practice:

- **Involving high-level political figures in the decision-making structures of the programme:** the programme's technical and steering committees are the main inter-sector coordination mechanisms and are chaired by the First Lady and the Minister of Education, respectively. This gave the programme visibility in the

¹ *School feeding in El Salvador: a case study of the transition* (WB/WFP, *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector*, 2009).

government, improved the quality of service delivery and increased high-level ownership of the programme.

- **Making information about the programme available to policy makers:** this allows policy makers to prioritize actions when planning. At least two nutrition surveys, targeting exercises, and a vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) have been used by decision-makers to prioritize and plan for the programme. All have been supported by WFP.
- **Planning capacity development activities based on in-depth assessments and knowledge about the institutional gaps:** based on these assessments, activities were planned using a variety of tools to strengthen the institutional framework (financing a government position, drafting Terms of References for coordinating body and dedicated unit, training on logistics, management, procurement). The result was a highly tailored and context-specific strategy to strengthen the institutional framework at all levels.
- **Investing resources on capacity development activities:** this requires availability of resources that are not tied to the quantities of food delivered. During the 1990s the country office monetized a portion of the food aid coming into the programme and used around 15 percent of the monetized resources for capacity development. The availability of resources allowed WFP to plan and implement a massive training and sensitization effort.
- **Designing a handover strategy with WFP:** having a clear agreement with WFP on the duration of assistance and designing a concrete handover strategy to transfer the responsibility of the programme has allowed for systematic planning.

Defining modality, food basket and ration design

- **A more varied, locally produced food basket:** the inclusion of local foodstuffs decreased the costs of the food basket and allowed for local purchases and smooth government take over. At least three different food baskets were piloted. When food types were not familiar, the community was familiarized with its characteristics and possible local recipes for preparation.

Food supply

- **Increasing local procurement to generate savings:** the Ministry of Education recently signed an agreement with WFP under which the Ministry transfers funds to WFP, which procures and distributes the food to extended delivery points at departmental level. By leveraging its experience in food procurement in the region, WFP has been able to increase the efficiency of the procurement process: in 2008, WFP was able to procure all food commodities at cheaper rates, generating savings of about US\$3 million, which were then used to expand coverage of the programme and increase the food basket.

LESSONS LEARNED

Handover arrangements

- **Gradually withdrawing from assisted areas:** a successful handover should not mean a complete disengagement with the programme. WFP could have provided technical assistance in the areas where it had already phased out operations to

avoid a gradual decline in the quality of service delivery and to support the government to maintain the programme.

Distribution arrangements

- **Ensuring timely distribution:** a recent baseline survey² showed that 17 percent of the schools did not prepare the meal on the same day of the distribution, due to the absence of the cook or to lack of organization. This percentage is too high, since most of the children cover long distances to get to school without having had breakfast at home. An improved organization of turns would impact positively on programme efficiency.

Complementary actions

- **Enhancing hygiene practices:** the aforementioned baseline survey showed that 46 percent of cooks do not wash their hands before preparing the meals and 23 percent do not wash utensils before cooking, thus increasing risks of contamination. WFP should sensitize the community on the importance of adequate hygiene practices.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Ensuring programme evaluation:** although monitoring of the programme has been strong, there has been no evaluation of the impact of school feeding in El Salvador. An evaluation of the programme would provide information for future design and implementation activities.

² Ministerio de Educación (Gobierno de El Salvador), *Informe del estudio de línea di base del PAE 2008, 2009.*