



## 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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## LAO PDR IMPROVING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

| COUNTRY OVERVIEW                     |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Children enrolled in primary school  | 892,000 |
| Girls enrolled in primary school     | 46%     |
| Out-of-school children               | 125,000 |
| Gross enrolment ratio                | 116%    |
| Survival rate to last grade          | 62%     |
| Repeaters (all grades)               | 18.2%   |
| WFP ASSISTANCE In 2008               |         |
| Children receiving school meals      | 90,000  |
| Children receiving take-home rations | 90,000  |
| Food distributed (mt)                | 4,100   |
| Schools assisted                     | 1,100   |

## OVERVIEW

Education in Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) suffers from a chronic shortage of human and financial resources. The cost of sending children to school, especially girls, is high for poor households, and education is given low priority.

Girls’ enrolment is low in poor rural areas and for some minority ethnic groups the enrolment rate can be as low as 8 percent. The girls enrolling often drop out of

school after grades 1 and 2. About 15 percent of villages have no school at all; 90 percent of schools in rural areas lack a complete, five-grade primary school.

| 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 national policies:** the 2004 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper cites school feeding as a measure to promote primary school participation of poor and vulnerable children in food-insecure areas, especially girls. School feeding is also listed as a strategic priority in the government's Education Sector Development Framework 2009-2015: school feeding is a strategy to promote enrolment and attendance. The programme is also cited in the Education for All National Plan of Action 2003-2015 as a measure to increase access to and participation in formal primary education. The Plan of Action sets standards for food quality and safety in school canteens and Health Service Corners in schools for deworming.

### Partnerships

- Improving the learning environment through partnership with UNICEF:** in 2006, WFP opened a new partnership with UNICEF, funded by the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID), known as Access to Basic Education in Laos (ABEL). UNICEF, through the Schools of Quality initiative, ensures proper learning and a healthy and safe school setting. UNICEF also provides water and sanitation facilities. In 2007, ABEL enabled WFP to significantly increase its implementation and monitoring capacity by engaging more field monitors, who support district officers in implementing the project. In 2008, about 280 schools in northern Lao PDR received the comprehensive package – a hygienic and inclusive learning environment with quality teaching and nutritious food.

### Handover arrangements

- Staff training to hand over and expand the programme:** WFP is committed to ultimately transfer ownership of school feeding activities to the government of Lao PDR. Capacity building and training activities are provided regularly for the Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Service and District Education Bureau staff. Around 120 government staff and grassroots organizations (such as the Lao Women's Union) attended a two-day workshop organized by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with WFP to exchange experiences on school feeding

and prepare for its expansion in 2009, to ultimately reach 433,000 beneficiaries by 2010.

### Targeting

- **Improving informal boarders' attendance through take-home rations:** girls and boys receive a take-home family ration composed of canned fish, rice and iodized salt as an incentive for parents to send them to school. Additional take-home rations are also provided to informal boarders – children who have no primary school in their own village and are obliged to walk for hours or stay in dormitories at the school – to encourage them to attend school despite long distances. From 2002 to 2008, absolute enrolment rates in primary schools benefiting from the programme increased from 60 percent to 88 percent for boys and from 53 percent to 84 percent for girls.

### Complementary actions

- **Preventing chronic malnutrition through nutrition education:** along with school feeding, a pilot initiative called *Feeding the future – a community-based approach to nutrition education* is being implemented through the non-formal education unit of the Ministry of Education and some grassroots organizations. The initiative aims to address early causes of chronic malnutrition by providing culturally tailored nutrition education to women of reproductive age and other care-givers at village level.