



# World Food Programme Two Minutes to Learn about School Meals

## WFP's Approach

School meals are an essential safety net, helping to ensure every child has access to education, health and nutrition. In the fight against hunger, school meals are a sound investment in the next generation, which is why WFP provided meals, snacks or take-home food to 16.4 million children in 60 countries last year.

Children from vulnerable families are often pulled out of school when more work is needed at home. A daily school meal is a strong incentive for families to consistently send their children to school. Just US\$0.25 will offer a child one school meal, while US\$50 can feed a child for an entire school year.

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 2016, WFP supported 60 governments to enhance the quality and efficiency of their national programmes, which resulted in enhanced school meals programmes for another 45 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.

## What Are WFP School Meals?

**In-school meals** Children are provided with breakfast, lunch or both while in school. Meals can be prepared at the school, in the community or be delivered from centralized kitchens. Some programmes provide complete meals, while others provide fortified, high-energy biscuits or nutritious snacks, such as date bars. As often as possible, food is procured locally.

**Take-home Food for Education** Families receive food and/or cash rations on the condition that their children attend school regularly. In-school meals, combined with these transfers, help lower drop-out rates and bring more out-of-school children to the classroom.



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### **Why School Meals?**

School meals 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 meals 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 school meal 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.

School meals also help keep children in school during emergencies or protracted crises, maintaining a 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 38 countries in response to armed conflict, natural disasters, and food and financial crises.

**Nutrition** In poor countries, school meals are 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.

### **WFP's presence**

In 2016, WFP directly provided school meals to 16.4 million children in 60 countries and 76,000 schools. Of these children, 1.7 million received school meals during an emergency. WFP also provided technical assistance to government-led programmes in 60 countries, supporting another 45 million children.

