

**FEED MINDS, CHANGE LIVES:  
School Feeding, the Millennium  
Development Goals and Girls'  
Empowerment**



**World Food Programme**

## **“L’Aquila” Joint Statement on Global Food Security *L’Aquila Food Security Initiative***

Delivering food, cash and vouchers through effective emergency assistance as well as through national safety-nets and nutrition schemes, such as food and cash for work, unconditional cash transfer programs, school feeding and mother-and-child nutrition programs, is an imperative goal.

*L’Aquila 10 July 2009*

## **The Addis Ababa Education For All Declaration**

We call upon **Education For All partners** to build inclusive education systems and intensify efforts to support initiatives targeted at the most marginalized, including social protection measures such as cash transfers and scholarships, community involvement and multi-sectoral approaches such as school feeding and early childhood development programmes.

*Addis Ababa, 23-25 February 2010*

## **Dakar Declaration on Accelerating Girls’ Education and Gender Equality**

We envision a world in which a special initiative for girls’ education is no longer needed – a world in which all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to transforming their societies, so that gender equality becomes a reality.

*Dakar, Senegal, 20 May 2010*

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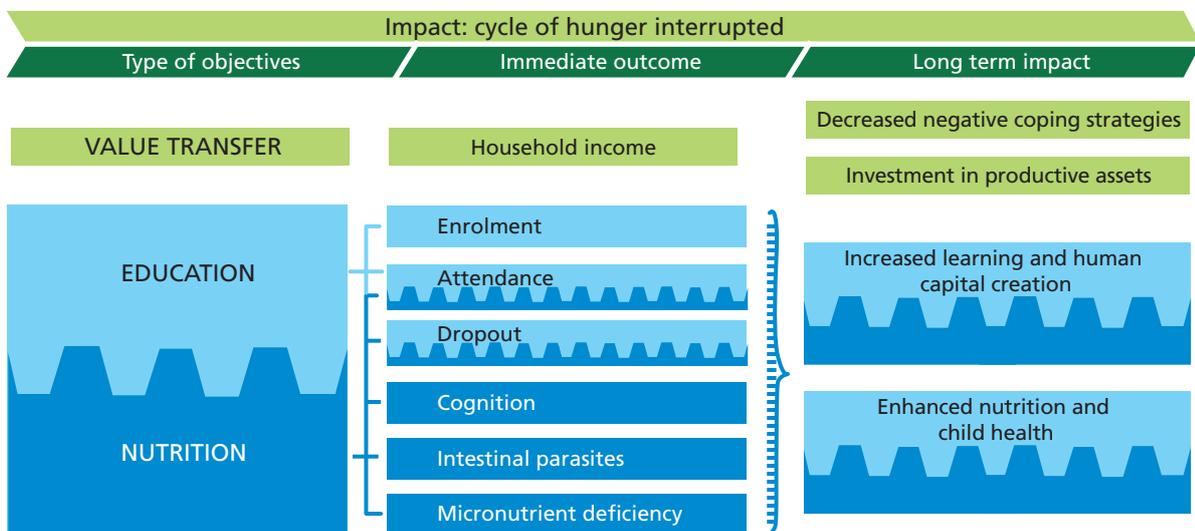
# Summary

School feeding contributes to the education and well-being of children. A hungry child does not grow, cannot learn as well and faces many health risks in the future. School feeding can bring children into school and out of hunger.

School feeding responds directly to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to hunger and poverty (MDG 1), education (MDG 2) and gender equality (MDG 3), and indirectly to child mortality and maternal health (MDGs 4 and 5).

- School feeding leads to outcomes that are mutually reinforcing, helping to lift households out of poverty to end the inter-generational cycle of hunger. School feeding facilitates education- and education, particularly for girls, leads to improved food security, health and nutrition, the effects of which all contribute to ending hunger.
- Providing food for consumption at school can relieve immediate short-term hunger which is very beneficial for learning. Alleviating short-term hunger among children at school helps to improve performance on school tests and promote normal progression from grade to grade in completing a basic education.
- School feeding helps close the gender gap in schools and helps to empower women by increasing their probability of employment.
- When girls are educated they are more likely to have fewer and healthier children and to head families that are food-secure.
- Maternal and infant mortality rates will decrease and better- educated girls will make more informed choices.

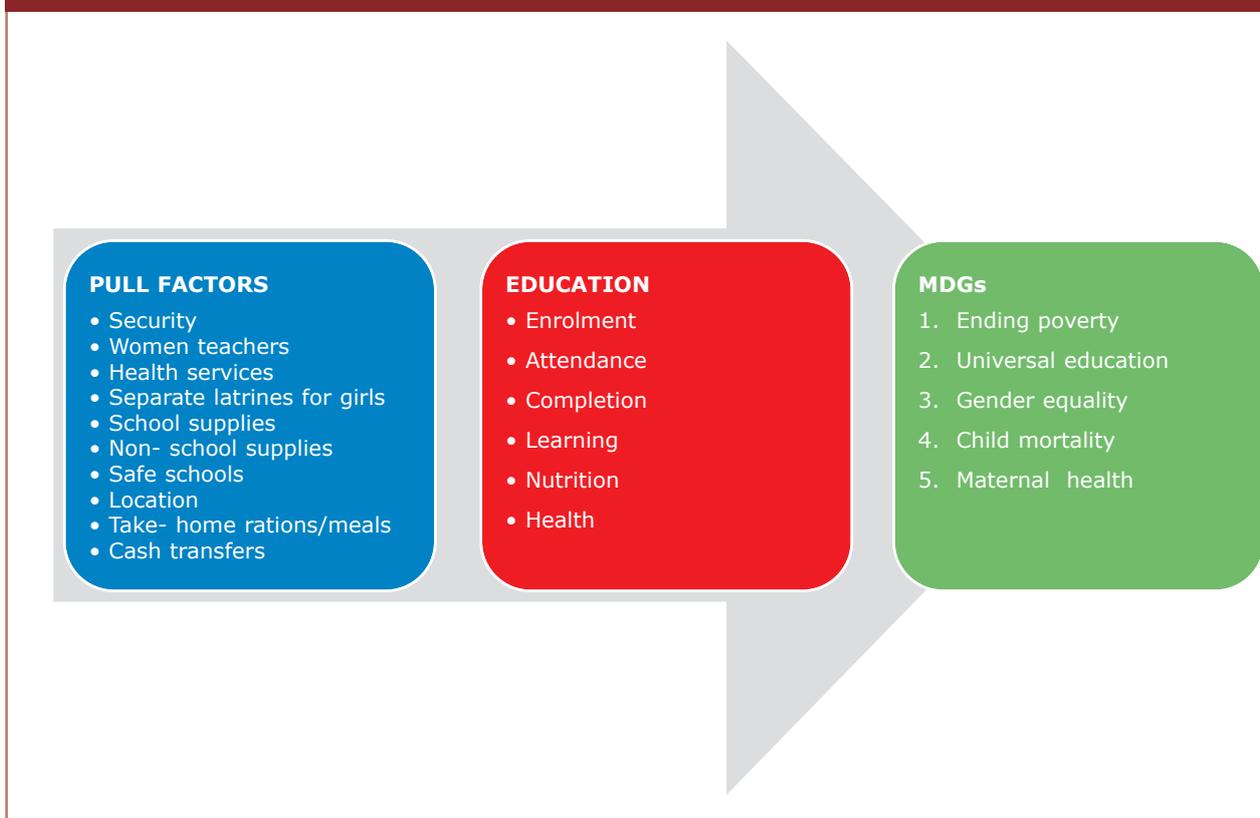
**Figure 1. School Feeding Results**



# 1 The Power of School Feeding

School feeding programmes are far more than food-giving. They are an investment in the world's poorest children. They are an investment in our common future and global stability. School feeding can bring children into school and out of hunger. Strong partnerships can increase factors that pull children to school.

**Figure 2. Impact on MDGs**



# 1 The Power of School Feeding

School feeding is a springboard for many positive outcomes for poor children and their families. School feeding programmes engage parents and communities in the promotion of public health, education and the creation of an independent future. Few safety-net programmes provide so many multi-sector benefits- education- gender equality, food security, poverty alleviation, nutrition and health – in one single intervention.



**Table 1. The Power of School Feeding**

<b>1.</b> Nutrition	Improved micronutrient and macronutrient intake enhance nutrition and lead to better child health, increased learning and decreased morbidity for students.
<b>2.</b> Education	School meals help to get children- especially girls- into school and keep them there, through increasing enrolment and reducing absenteeism.
<b>3.</b> Gender and reaching other vulnerable children	School feeding makes a proven positive contribution to gender equality. It especially promotes access to school for disadvantaged girls, boys, orphans and other vulnerable children such as those affected by HIV/AIDS.
<b>4.</b> Value transfer	School feeding works as a safety net that transfers significant level of value to households with school-age children. The school feeding value transferred frees up resources within households, averting negative coping strategies and allowing investments in productive assets.
<b>5.</b> Platform for wider socio-economic benefits	School feeding when linked to agricultural production, local food procurement and processing, has significant economic development and spin-offs. It can serve as a platform for Essential Package interventions - water, sanitation, nutrition, health and hygiene education, school gardens, improved environmental technologies and practices.

## 2 Working with Partners

Partnership is key to the success of any school feeding intervention. School feeding must complement education interventions. Educational provision, in quality and quantity, must be able to respond to the increased demand resulting from school feeding programmes.

With national governments in the lead, local organizations, international agencies and donors must increase commitment to education and work together to coordinate the wide spectrum of interventions that make this commitment real.

Partnerships in school feeding are on the rise. Since early 2008, the World Bank Group and WFP have been working together to help countries develop sustainable school feeding programs that provide social safety nets and promote education. The dimensions of food security and local agricultural production have been added to the work of this partnership through links with New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)/Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), WFP's Purchase for Progress programme and a grant to the Partnership for Child Development from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).

This school feeding movement has been bolstered by the governments of Brazil and the Russian Federation, which have joined the ranks of school feeding donors (such as Australia, Canada, Egypt, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg,

United States of America and others). Brazil and the Russian Federation have brought their particular in-depth knowledge of national school feeding programmes to create a powerful force to develop national capacity for locally sourced "home grown" school feeding programmes.

United Nations agencies also work together to provide the Essential Package of 12 complementary interventions.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP collaborate through the Essential Package, an integrated package of cost-effective interventions, to improve the nutritional status and health of school children.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a vital actor in the school garden activities of the Essential Package. The World Health Organization (WHO), along with Deworm the world, is active in tackling the problem of high worm prevalence in school-age children.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the lead agency for Education for All (EFA) global movement which aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and the World Bank are the major international stakeholders in the EFA movement.

## 2 Working with Partners

The Essential Package includes:

- **Basic education**
- **Food for education**
- **Promotion of girls' education**
- **Potable water and sanitary latrines**
- **Health, nutrition and hygiene education**
- **Systematic deworming**
- **Micronutrients supplementation**
- **HIV and AIDS interventions**
- **Psychosocial support education**
- **Malaria prevention**
- **School gardens**
- **Improved stoves**

Many international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are engaged in school feeding including World Vision International, Catholic Relief Services, Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE, Plan International and Joint Aid Management. These partners provide implementation support and complementary activities. Partners in the private sector include The Boston Consulting Group, TNT, and Unilever.

Other partners include Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Global Child Nutrition Foundation and International Food Policy Research Institute.

**Figure 3. Partners for Better Schools**



# 3 Reaching Vulnerable Children

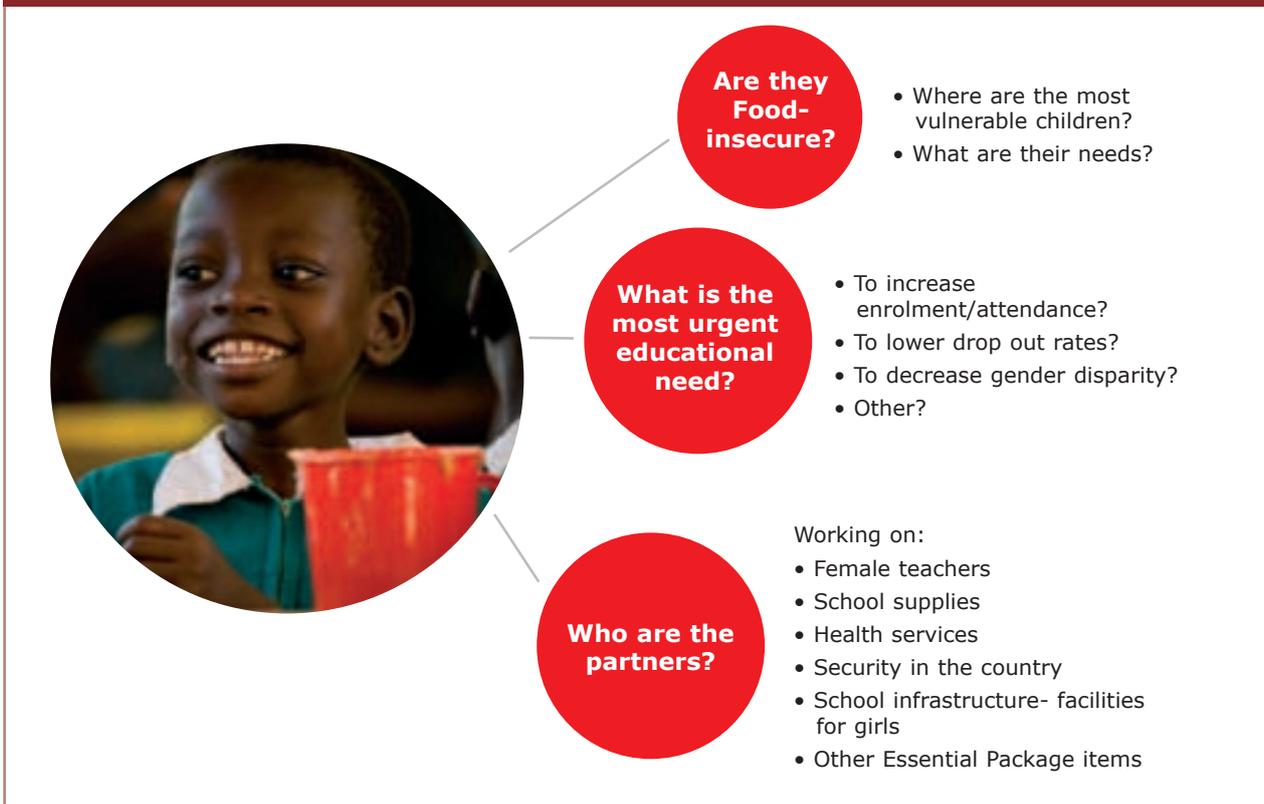
School feeding helps children to go to school and invest in their own future and the future of their country. These children represent the future: they will be the future graduates - who will change the destiny of their countries.

WFP concentrates its efforts and resources on the neediest people and countries. Working with national governments partners, communities and schools, WFP targets the most food insecure and vulnerable children.

The framework WFP uses includes the areas presented in the figure below.



**Figure 4. The Who, Where, What, How?**



# 4 School Feeding: Contributing to MDGs 1 and 2

- **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
- **Achieve universal education**

*“During school visits, I have noticed that food plays an important part in the success of students.”*

(Her Royal Highness Princess  
Maha Chakri Sirindhorn - Thailand)

There is ample evidence to support two simple truths: food attracts poor children to school and education helps break the cycle of poverty.

School feeding programmes concentrate on breaking the vicious poverty cycle by investing in child development, using food to get children to school and keep them there.



## SCHOOL FEEDING BREAKS THE POVERTY CYCLE

A joint cost-benefit analysis undertaken in 2009 by The Boston Consulting Group and WFP compared costs in Ghana, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Zambia related to the design, implementation and delivery of school feeding with the benefits arising from the three major outcomes: increased education, improved nutrition and health, and value transfer to the beneficiaries. The findings revealed that school feeding improves enrolment, attendance and cognition, decreases drop-out and morbidity; and enhances disease awareness. These lead to increased wages, a longer productive life which together lead to increased lifetime earnings. School meals and take-home rations translate into savings at household level, which can result in increased returns on investment. The analysis also highlighted the reinforcing and multiplication effects between the various outcomes that make school feeding unique. The study pointed to two conclusions:

- Investing in school feeding creates significant economic value;
- School feeding is a unique safety net driven by the interdependency between various outcomes, and combines short, medium, and long-term benefits.

# School Feeding Beneficiaries

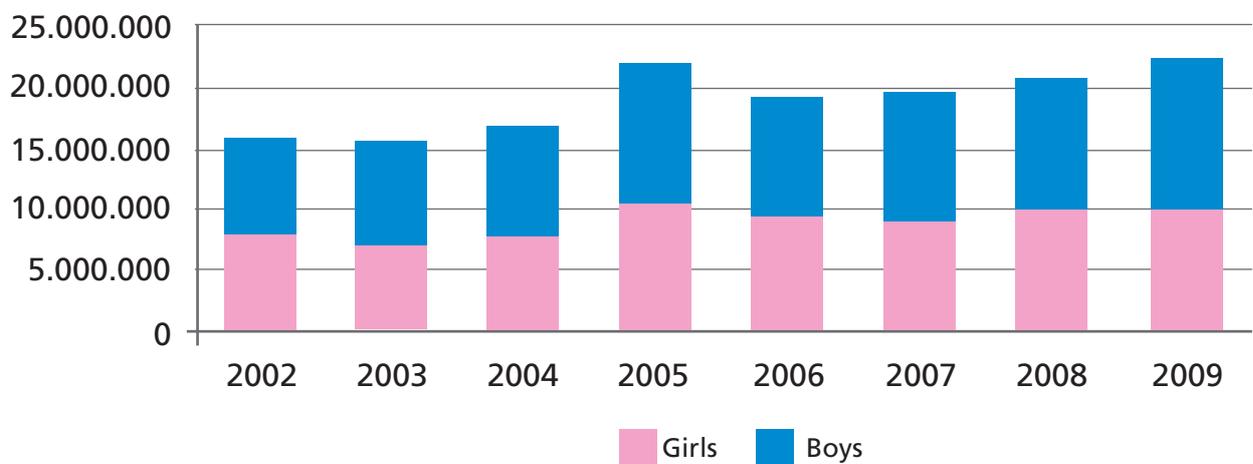
While WFP is the largest international provider of school feeding programmes, national governments have the greatest potential to reach hungry school children. For instance, India reaches 130 million children with a mid-day meal and Brazil reaches 50 million.

Since it was founded, WFP has provided food to school children as a way of contributing to child

development. WFP's school feeding programmes have expanded or contracted according to need and the availability of resources.

In 2009, WFP-assisted school feeding programmes were implemented in 63 countries and reached approximately 22 million boys and girls. School feeding includes on site school meals, snacks and take-home rations.

**Graph 1. Beneficiaries Reached by World Food Programme: School Feeding Girls and Boys**



# Girls too

“*School lunches are the most cost effective and powerful tool in the world to empower girls' human rights. When we feed a girl we help empower a family, a village and a nation.*”

(Josette Sheeran, Executive Director, WFP)

WFP reaches girls through school meals, snacks and take-home rations. **Meals at school** provide a nutritional incentive for girls to attend school. They reduce short-term hunger and provide the micronutrients needed to grow and learn. School meals also offset some of the cost of education so that a poor family has one less meal per day to provide.

WFP seeks to increase the percentage of girls going to school through targeted interventions, such as **take-home rations** (THRs). The rations are given to girls in return for meeting a minimum school attendance requirement (usually 20 days per month). The take-home rations may be provided alone or in addition to school meals. The rations offset the families' loss of girls' labour and are effective economic incentives for families to send their girls to school.

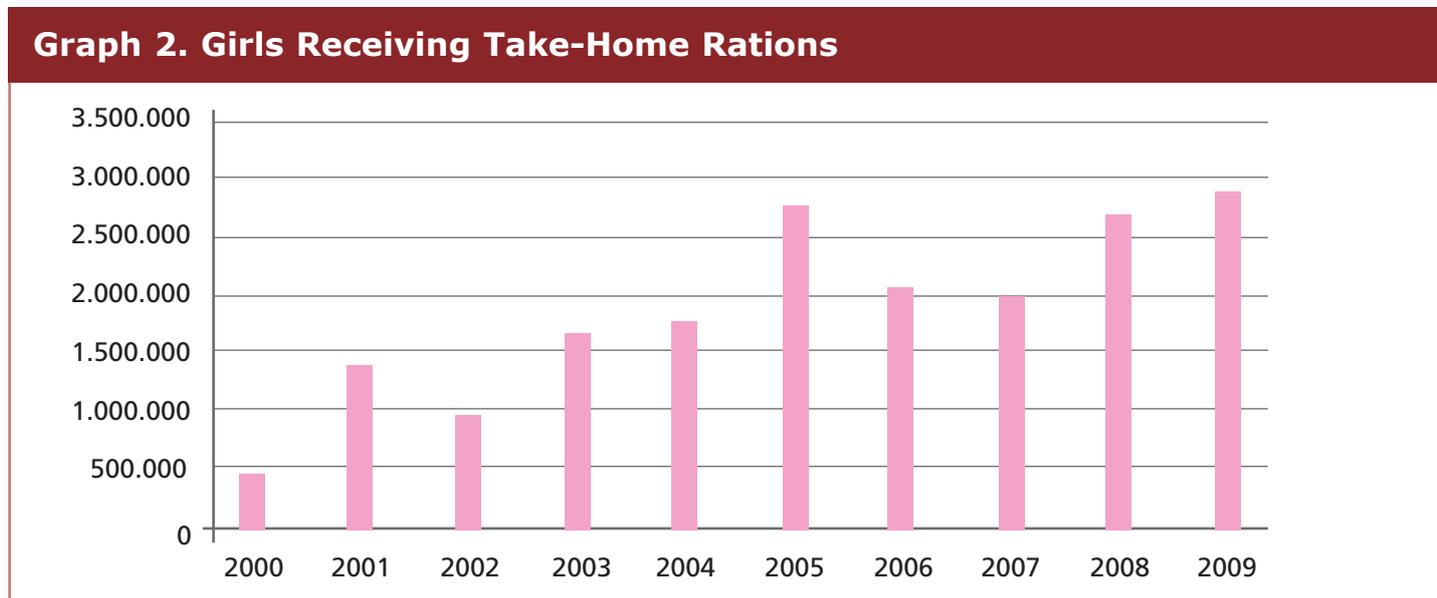
Take-home rations are also appropriate in providing support to vulnerable children such as orphans.



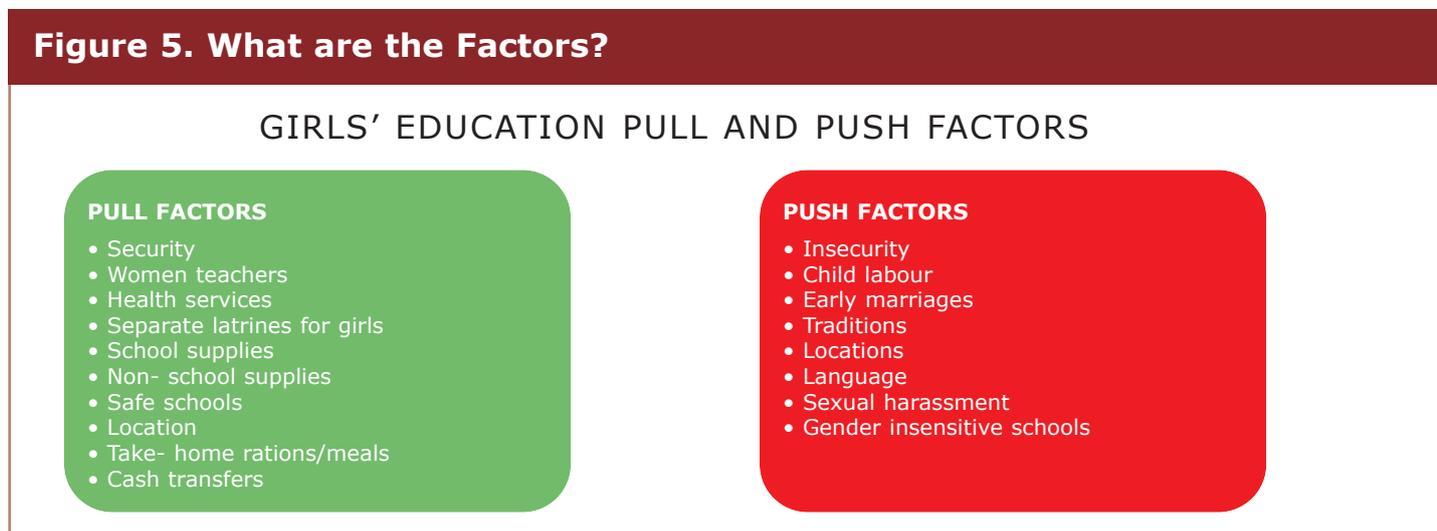


The number of girls reached by School feeding has increased from 8 million girls in 2002 to 10.2 million or 47% of school feeding beneficiaries in 2009.

Take-home rations contributed to the education of 3 million girls in 2009. School feeding serves as an incentive for girls to move on to secondary education.



Strong partnerships can increase the factors that pull girls to school.



# 5 School Feeding: Contributing to MDG 3

- **Promote gender equality and empower women**

**Amina, 12 years old, from Hamarta Durdur-Ad School in Awdal, Somaliland, northwest Somalia.**

*"When the school feeding programme started in my village five years ago, I did not hesitate to send Amina to school, primarily for food. In addition to the two meals at school, Amina also received a monthly take-home ration of 3.6 kg of vegetable oil, which was a great help for us. I am happy that Amina performs well at school. I hope that the knowledge she gets will shape a better future."*

**Amina's mother.**

*"Without the WFP oil, it would have been impossible to convince my parents to send me to school."*

**Bibi Gula, 13 years old, outskirts of Kandahar in Afghanistan.**

*"The morning porridge I get at school is normally my first meal for the day because we rarely have enough food to eat at home. In the afternoon, I get porridge with pulses and this encourages me to come to school everyday."*

**Lerato Mokhothu, 11 years old, Bokong in Lesotho.**

*"I want to become a teacher, and if you continue this project long enough, my father will want me to go to school and I will be able to finish my studies. Otherwise, I will have to take care of cows all my life."*

**Leila, 9 years old from Deir Ezzor in Syria.**

*"Had I not come back to school, I would have ended up as a beggar. The biscuits gave me a reason to continue my studies and follow my dreams."*

**Rehena, 13 years old from Bagerhat District in Bangladesh.**

*"It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation."*

(Nelson Mandela)

Education increases the probability of a girl playing an active role in her national social, political and economical activities.

Poverty and tradition are the main reasons why the exclusion of girls from schooling is persistent and widespread. More than half of the 72 million<sup>1</sup> primary school-aged children not attending school are girls. Two-thirds of them are in poor communities of sub-Saharan Africa and South and East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Girls still drop out of school at higher rates than boys. School feeding, especially take-home rations increases the probability of parents sending their girls to school and keeping them there.

Food can also support girls and women to receive literacy and numeracy training and vocational and life skills, even if they are not able to gain a formal education. These skills are empowering and critical for dealing with life decisions, caring for families, accessing jobs and other opportunities, and contributing to society.



School feeding is a major pull factor for girls' education. Surveys have found more girls enrolled in school feeding-assisted schools than in non-assisted. School feeding also has an impact on girls completing primary school.

Recent evaluations and studies have found encouraging results. Analysis of WFP survey data from 32 countries in sub-Saharan Africa that grouped 4,000 primary schools showed that girls' enrolments went up by 28 percent, twice the rate in schools not receiving assistance.

When on-site school meals were combined with take-home rations for a student's family, girls' enrolment in the highest primary grade surged by 46 percent, twice the yearly rate for girls in schools offering only on-site meals. The study found that older girls are less likely to drop out, and that girls are more likely to stay in class throughout primary school when they bring food home to their families on top of their school meals.

Northern rural India, school feeding-assisted schools:<sup>3</sup>

- Attendance of girls 15 % higher
- 30% higher chances that girls complete primary education (positive effect on girls' grade attainment)

Pakistan, a programme giving conditional THR of oil has changed the way the parents think and act. Before the programme started, 48% of households did not send any of their daughters to school; afterwards, all households educated at least one daughter.<sup>4</sup>

School feeding-assisted schools:<sup>5</sup>

- Female enrolment rose by 22%
- Drop out rates among girls decreased by 5% (per year)

Bangladesh, school feeding-assisted schools:

- Girls' drop out dropped from 14.7 % to 5.3 %<sup>6</sup>
- Attendance increased from 71.3 % to 78.7 %<sup>7</sup>
- Girls succeeded in grade attainment on average by 3.9 %<sup>8</sup>

WFP reached 22 million children with school meals or take-home rations, 47% of whom were girls. WFP's work in achieving gender parity in primary education through school feeding has gained much traction in target areas.

- **Afghanistan.** More families sent their girls to school encouraged by the incentives provided to girls; the result was a 230% increase in the ratio of girls to boys since 2006.
- **Bhutan.** With the objective of closing the significant gap between girls' and boys' enrolment in primary school, WFP supported the government in creating a safe learning environment for girls by ensuring the availability of water and sanitation facilities in boarding schools. WFP supported the construction of matrons' quarters in remote schools to address the serious shortage of women teachers in remote schools. The gender ratio has improved from 0.84 in 2007 to 0.94 in 2009.

### Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn:<sup>9</sup>

There's no silver bullet, and that includes girls' education. But educating girls may be the single most cost-effective way to empower and modernize societies, to help people help themselves. Larry Summers said back when he was chief economist at the World Bank that girls' education was such a great investment that the question was not whether we could afford to educate girls, but whether we could afford not to. Of course, it's also important to educate boys, but there are a couple of reasons why girls' education brings an even higher return. First, it reduces birth rates very considerably, which brings the country a demographic dividend. Second, more educated people tend to have higher incomes, and women are more likely than men to use extra income to educate their own children and to start small businesses.

- **Ghana.** Interviews with community members, district officials, teachers and girls themselves across several schools with and without take-home ration suggest that the cohort of 40,000 girls who were supported by the WFP programme were "pioneer" girls in their communities, who for the first time were reaching junior high school. The THR had acted as an incentive for girls to remain in school. Such results postpone early marriages; reduce the incidents of families sending girls to work in the cities.
- **Lesotho.** School feeding is securing the future of children in households burdened by HIV and AIDS, particularly those that have lost the main

income earner. While Lesotho has achieved gender parity in primary education, enrolment and attendance levels are on the decline for both boys and girls who are facing increasing household economic responsibilities. Girls' and boys' education are disrupted by early marriages and participation in agricultural activities during the planting and harvesting period. Support by WFP has prevented a drastic decline in the participation in basic education.

- **Somalia.** The ratio of girls to boys enrolled in WFP-assisted primary schools increased from 0.4 in 2006 to 0.77 in 2009. The increased enrolment of girls can be attributed to the sustained provision of girl's take-home rations, which gives the family an incentive to send the girls to school.



# 6 School Feeding: Contributing to MDGs 4 and 5

- **Reduce child mortality**
- **Improve maternal health**

“Girls are going to school, getting a better education, getting jobs and, as a result, delaying marriages - it's as simple as that.”

(Ishtiaq Mannan, *Save the Children*)



## **BANGLADESH: Educating girls lowers maternal death rate**

WASHINGTON DC, 11 June 2010 (IRIN)

Despite slow progress in increasing the number of skilled birth attendants, Bangladesh has made enormous reductions in maternal mortality by improving girls' education.

Improving the education of women has been a key factor in bringing down the MMR. In 2001, the Bangladesh government began offering free education for girls up to 12th grade, with additional incentives like food for education. Girls' enrolment in secondary schools jumped from 1.1 million in 1991 to 3.9 million in 2005, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Women who are better informed are also more active in making family planning choices.

Married women are also having fewer children: a woman had an average of 6.3 children in the 1970s, 3.4 in the early 1990s, and 2.4 in the survey period between 2004 and 2006.

School feeding contributes to MDG 4 and 5 through its educational impacts on future parents which in turn impacts the next generation. Education influences girls' economic opportunities, their participation in community, decision-making, HIV infections rates and the level of literacy and child malnutrition.

School feeding encourages girls to stay in school thereby delaying early marriages and pregnancies. Girls who go to school marry later and have 50 per cent fewer children on average.<sup>10</sup> More mature and more educated mothers are usually better equipped to foster their children.<sup>11</sup> Educated mothers start prenatal care early, are more likely to meet their own nutritional requirements when they are pregnant.

- Education is one of the most effective ways to improve food security: when girls are educated they are more likely to have fewer and healthier children and to head families that are food-secure.<sup>12</sup>
- The odds of having a stunted child decrease by 4-5 percent for every additional year of formal education by mothers.<sup>13</sup>

## 5 School Feeding: Contributing to MDGs 4 and 5

- Education empowers girls to make health decisions. A study in Uganda demonstrated that each additional year of education for girls reduces their chances of contracting HIV by 6.7 percent.<sup>14</sup> It does not only change the lives of girls but also the lives of their future children.
- Women's literacy and declining fertility and infant mortality rates correlate positively. Better educated girls make more informed choices. The World Bank estimated that only one additional year of schooling for girls reduces fertility by 10 percent,<sup>15</sup> every extra year of schooling for an additional 1,000 girls would prevent 60 infant deaths.



# 7 72 Million Children Out of School

“At current rates of progress, 56 million lives will be blighted by lack of access to education in 2015, and 56 million opportunities to promote economic development will have been missed.”

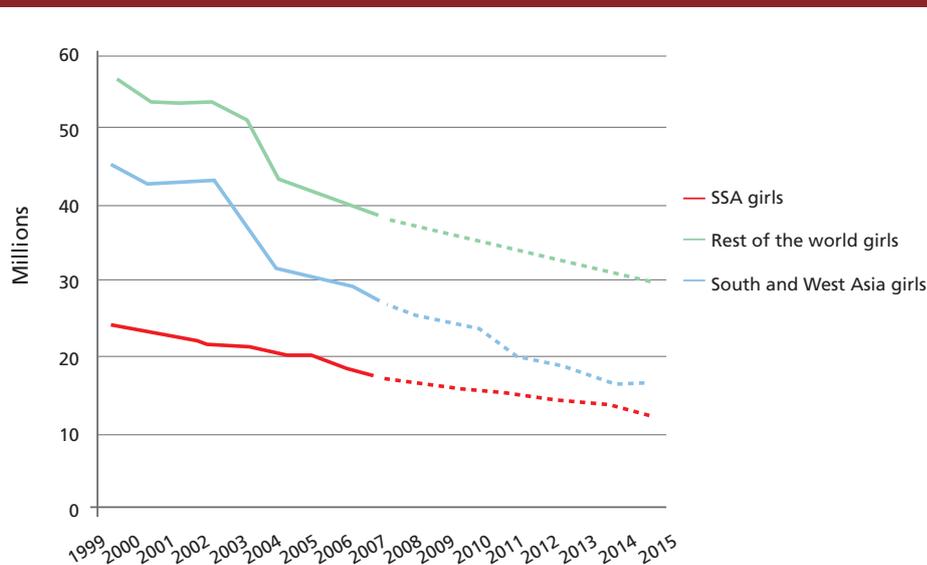
(Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director- United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) global conference on girls’ education focuses on preventing “56 million wasted opportunities”).

In the last decade, there has been progress in girls’ education and overall many more girls and boys have been enrolled in schools worldwide. Gender gaps have closed or are closing in most regions, including central and Eastern Europe, East Asia and Latin America. Progress has been made in increasing enrolment by:

- Abolishing school fees
- Building new schools/child friendly schools
- Ensuring sanitary facilities for both girls and boys
- Boosting the recruitment of teachers
- Providing school meals/take-home rations
- Targeted initiatives like UNGEI

Despite this progress, many countries missed the 2005 Millennium Development Goal benchmark on gender parity and education. Estimation in 2007 shows 72 million children were out of school; 54% or 39 million are girls. Business as usual will leave 56 million children out of school by 2015.<sup>16</sup> Most of them girls.

**Graph 3. Projected Numbers of Out-of-School Girls in 2015**



SSA- sub Saharan Africa

NOTE:

Projections based on regional compound growth rates for 1999- 2007. Source: UIS database (data 1999-2007) in EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010. In 2007 there were 72 million children out of school, 54 % were girls (39 million). It is assumed that in 2015 there will be 56 million children out of school of whom 54 % will be girls (30 million). In particular, sub Saharan Africa (SSA) will have 12 million South and West Asia 4 million and the rest of the world will have 13.5 million girls out school.

## 8 Action Now

*“Only when governments, international institutions, and civil society work together unstintingly can we ensure that all girls receive an education.”*

(Prime Minister of Senegal, Mr. Souleymane Ndéné Ndiaye - United Nations Girls' Education Initiative global conference 'Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality', May 2010, Dakar)

*“The present situation demands urgent action. Millions of children are still denied an education and most of them are girls... Taking a rights based approach to education requires us to know who is not in school, to find out what it will take to get them and keep them there—and then to make it happen...”*

(Ms. Cheryl Gregory Faye,  
Head of the UNGEI Secretariat)

School feeding contributes to getting more girls into school and keeping them there. School feeding can be a partial reimbursement to parents for the opportunity cost of their girls being in school. Action by all partners is needed to work on both the pull and push factors for girls' education.

To reach more children in need, school feeding has to be sustainable. Through sustainable school feeding, more school children will be lifted out of hunger, more children will go to

school, more poor families will benefit from productive safety nets, more impact will be made on child hunger, universal education, and gender equality and eventually poverty reduction.

National governments are in the lead to create a new generation of school feeding programmes as productive safety nets, targeting food insecurity and encouraging local production. National governments must eventually own and fund school feeding programmes as part of their own long-term strategies to end hunger.





Development partners must support national governments, communities, and schools to design and implement targeted, cost-effective, nutritious school feeding programmes as part of a comprehensive essential package and which are aligned with eight quality standards for sustainability .<sup>17</sup>

We need to act now to make 2015 different from today with more children in schools. As partners for a better future for our children we can start urgently to focus on these issues in order to increase the probability of our success:

- Urgent government commitment, specific policies and budgets targeted to education, including special measures for girls' education.
- Widened partnership reach.
- Wide advocacy campaigns for girls' education with governments, communities, parents and peers.
- Widen resources modality: cash transfers, school feeding programmes, other social protection safety nets.
- Results frameworks: surveys, baseline studies/data collection, monitoring, evaluation, reporting.
- Increasing the pull factors and reducing the push factors of girls' education.



# Notes

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**FEED MINDS,  
CHANGE LIVES:  
School Feeding,  
the Millennium  
Development  
Goals and Girls'  
Empowerment**

For more detailed information  
visit our website:

[wfp.org/school-meals](http://wfp.org/school-meals)

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**World Food Programme**