

EQ Review

Educational Quality in the Developing World



EQ Review is a bimonthly newsletter published by USAID's EQUIP1 to share knowledge about issues fundamental to improving educational quality and to communicate the successes, challenges, & lessons learned by USAID Missions.

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Introduction to FAE

Food Assisted Education

What is Food Assisted Education?

Food Assisted Education (FAE) or Food for Education (FFE) programs are based on using food to support educational objectives in a variety of ways.

FAE works through general ration distribution when additional food is given to schools, families, and/or pupils with the explicit aim of supporting education activities. FAE assists schools and communities through food for work activities. FAE also provides incentives to teachers by giving them meals, which have improved their attendance.

Food may be monetized, or sold, and the proceeds from the sale used for a wider range of development activities from infrastructural improvements to support for capacity building of PTAs in the development of teaching and learning materials.

School feeding programs (SFP) generally have the objective of improving the concentration of school age children, nutritional status, enrollment, or attendance. School feeding programs feed children at school with a snack or meal before school or at midday.

What are the benefits of Food Assisted Education?

There is a great diversity of experience and views among policy makers and practitioners as to what defines effective uses of food in an education setting. For example, there is evidence that FAE initiatives that are well designed, well-managed, and closely monitored help alleviate short-term hunger; motivate parents to enroll their children and encourage regular attendance; address micronutrient deficiencies; and increase the participation of parents and other community members in schools.¹

The benefits of many school feeding programs to child nutrition and growth, however, have not been substantiated despite decades of experience. Furthermore, evaluations of stand-alone school feeding programs indicate that they may have a positive impact on school attendance, but that their impact on educational outcomes is limited.

What are accepted good practices?

FAE programs strive to improve the educational and health impacts of their programs and to increase their capacity to measure those impacts. Effective practices include:

- Building clarity and consensus on policy issues, program objectives, and related interventions among all stakeholders throughout the life of a program.
- Integrating or linking FAE/SFPs with complementary interventions addressing similar objectives.
- Reaching high-risk families where food is a sufficient incentive to send their children to school.
- Linking efforts to develop local capacity for supporting quality education programs through increased community participation in schools.
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation system that is clearly linked to program objectives.
- Considering carefully all costs incurred, especially given the management efforts and the high logistical costs of FAE.

¹ DelRosso, J.M., (August 1999) School Feeding Programs: Improving the Effectiveness and Increasing Benefit for Education - A Guide for Development and Human Development Program Managers. Partnership for Child Network, World Bank, Washington, DC.

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Food Assisted Education

SCHOOL-FEEDING IN GHANA'S POOREST REGIONS

SCHOOL CANTEENS IN BENIN

In a bid to increase enrollment and attendance, especially for girls, in the northern regions of Ghana, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in collaboration with Ghana Education Service, is using US PL480 Title II Food Program resources to support a program of school feeding, community sensitization, capacity building, and infrastructure projects.

Each child in a program school is entitled to a hot lunch, and girls who maintain a monthly attendance of 85% receive a take-home food ration.

Before participating in a school-feeding program, communities are sensitized on their roles and responsibilities in the education of their children and on the expectations of the intervention.

Communities provide the overall responsibility and labor for ensuring safe, secure, and leak-proof storage facilities for all commodities, and providing safe and neat kitchens, volunteer cooks, and cooking utensils. Communities are encouraged to contribute supplemental foodstuffs as needed for the lunches.

A community-based committee oversees the use of resources and assists teachers to run the program effectively. Teachers and community members involved in the program undergo management training and annual workshops.

Since the program started in 1997, the following results have been achieved:

- average number of children per program has increased more than 3 times;
- attendance rates at the program schools have improved 33%;
- nearly 4 times more primary school children and 1.6 times more schools receive hot lunches; and
- 85% of the girls achieve the 85% attendance rate needed to receive the take-home rations.

Despite these educational and short-term food security outcomes, one of the biggest challenges of school-feeding is its low sustainability in rural food insecure communities. Persistent drought and poor soils makes it almost impossible for parents to feed children once a program ends.

For more information, contact Pamela Allen at palen@usaid.gov.

Several factors contribute to the low enrollment and attendance rates in Benin, including the lack of funds for school or school lunch, the long distances from villages to schools that leads to children leaving school early to go home to eat, and the cultural assumption that girls will remain home to do chores and take care of siblings.

In May 2000, USAID/Benin began supporting the community-run school canteen program developed by Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The program reaches primary school students in 26 rural communities. The success of the canteens is due in part to the program's three main strategies: parent and community involvement, parent contributions, and collaboration with others in the education sector.

To improve community and parental involvement in school management, community and PTA members receive initial and periodic management training that empowers them to administer the canteens. Training also includes a literacy campaign that has taught fundamental reading, writing, and math skills to 239 PTA members.

In addition, parents contribute to the canteen through in-kind (local produce such as corn, millet, yams, cassava) and cash donations. These contributions keep parents involved and add to the long-term sustainability of the canteens.

Finally, CRS/Benin assists schools in which other organizations already have projects, thereby increasing the impact of all interventions at those schools.

The increase in parent and community involvement in school canteens has led to improved student attendance. Parents also think that their children are more alert in class and more focused on their studies.

Other significant outcomes of the school canteen program include family adults having more time for their agricultural activities because children are in school, and having reduced domestic chores (e.g., cooking) and family domestic food expenses.

For more information, contact Georgette Pokou at gpokou@usaid.gov.

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See the USAID/Africa
Bureau Issue Brief
Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa, pg 20 for a
review of School Feeding.

Food Assisted Education

GFEI IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



F AE in Ghana



Canteens in Benin

The Global Food for Education Initiative (GFEI) in the Dominican Republic (DR) is a diverse and unique program funded from a USDA Food-Aid donation, which was monetized by the Government of the DR and managed by USAID.

The funds generated from the sale of food products are deposited in a special account and representatives of the DR and US Governments jointly decide on their use. The GFEI program carries out school feeding, and other activities to improve school infrastructure, community health, teacher training, and child nutrition. All programs emphasize community participation and parental involvement in schooling.

Hot school lunches are provided using locally produced and traditional food to over 50,000 students enrolled in the 405 participating schools. The benefits of the local-ration school lunch menu include: 1) stimulation of the local economy by local purchases, 2) stimulation of local production of food items, 3) participation of parents and community members, 4) exceeding FAO recommended nutritional requirements, and 5) preparation of foods that are traditional and thus accepted.

Studies revealed that most major factors inhibiting the quality of rural education are centered around the family. Hence, the most important component of the program is strengthening the community-school link.

The program is investing in training parents, forming health and nutrition promoters, and strengthening the ability of PTAs to contribute to the long-term sustainability of educational reforms.

Empowerment by the GFEI program to allow communities to tailor program activities to their individual needs has been key to its success in the DR.

For more information, contact Neici Zeller at nzeller@usaid.gov.

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How can we move forward?

As FFE activities grow and new approaches emerge, the issues surrounding FAE need to be more clearly articulated and discussed. Further definition of good practice - a compilation and dissemination of effective tools, processes, and methods to assist donors and implementing agencies in program planning and execution - is needed.

For more information, contact Susan Ross at sross@care.org.

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To contribute to *EQ Review* please contact Kim Bolyard, kbolyard@air.org, or John Hatch, jhatch@usaid.gov.

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