



# School Feeding/Nutrition for Education

Mid Term Evaluation by Tufts University

## Summary of the Major Findings

In July 2002, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) initiated a School Feeding (SF)/Nutrition for Education (NE) programme targeted to schools in chronically food insecure rural areas and in urban slums of Dhaka city.

The SF programme provides a packet of fortified biscuits to each child per day of attendance in a programme school. The biscuits provide 300 kilocalories (about 15% of daily calorie requirements), and a range of 14 micronutrients contributing about 75% of the daily requirements of mainly vitamin A, zinc, folate, and iron.

### Tufts University's Evaluation<sup>1</sup>

During May-June 2002, the WFP and Tufts University undertook a baseline survey. Two years later, in July-August 2004, WFP and Tufts University returned to the same schools to collect follow-up data for a pre-post evaluation of the impact of the SFP on key programme impacts.

### Major findings

Looking at the changes in WFP-assisted schools compared with other non-assisted schools in the same geographical areas from baseline to follow up, the SF programme showed a positive and significant impact particularly on enrolment and attendance rate.

Detail findings on the SF outcome areas are described below:

- 1. Enrolment:** Intervention schools showed no significant change in enrolment from baseline to follow up, while control schools showed a decline. The impact of the programme on enrolment is an improvement by 13.4 percent, a significant impact of SF/NE on children's enrolment.
- 2. Attendance:** Attendance rates in the intervention schools increased significantly between baseline and follow-up in all months surveyed. This was the case for both boys and girls. Intervention schools consistently showed greater increase compared to control schools. On average the improvement in attendance, intervention schools against control groups, is about 5%.
- 3. Dropout Rate:** A significant changes is observed in dropout rates between the baseline and follow-up surveys for both the intervention and control schools. The difference between control and intervention school is not statistically significant.
- 4. Repetition:** Repetition occurs when a student is held back and has to repeat a grade. Overall, repetition increased in both intervention and control schools, with a significant positive difference only for boys and total students in intervention schools compared to control school (4% and 3.7% respectively).

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<sup>1</sup> Tufts University conducted: "Mid Term Evaluation" Report available with SF/NE section



5. **Classroom behaviour:** Teachers report a decrease in children with difficulty concentrating in class, an improvement in regard to disruptive behaviour and an increase in children's attentiveness and interest in their studies.
6. **Meal substitution:** Providing a snack in school might discourage parents from providing their children with a meal before coming to school. The study shows that children in intervention schools were significantly more likely to have eaten before school. There is no evidence that the SF biscuits are substitutes for home consumption of family food. An important substitution is that some parents reported they no longer needed to give their children 1-2 taka for tiffin, representing cash saving to the family.
7. **School Management Committee (SMC):** SMC members report that the introduction of the SF programme increased their sense of participation in the school. The members are more interested because of a sense of purpose; improved attendance and they find their involvement in the programme rewarding. There was an increase in female membership, which was not significantly different from the control schools.

*There are no gender-based differences in receipt or consumption of the SF biscuits nor on the effects of the programme on education indicators.*

#### **Recommendations:**

- In light of the positive effects on enrolment and attendance, reported impact on attention and motivation, and likely benefits for nutritional status and health, providing the support of SF programme to more low-income schools of the country is justified.
- In future studies, it would be useful to include measures of health and nutrition outcomes, as these can be very important benefits of school feeding programmes.
- It might also be useful to explore the usefulness of complementary interventions like e.g. de-worming.
- It is hard to justify not providing younger children with a nutritional supplement in the intervention schools, given the recognized value of intervening as early as possible to improve nutritional status of children at-risk, both for health and growth and for cognitive benefit.
- The availability of clean water would be useful both for current participating schools and for identifying schools to receive the SF programme in future.