School Feeding: Linking Education, Health and Agricultural Development
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Executive summary

The 2008 food, fuel and financial crises have highlighted the importance of school feeding programmes both as a social safety net for children living in poverty and food insecurity, and as part of national educational policies and plans. School feeding programs can help to get children into school and help to keep them there, through enhancing enrolment and reducing absenteeism; and once the children are in school, the programs can contribute to their learning, through avoiding hunger and enhancing cognitive abilities.

It is for this reason that at the EFA meeting in Addis Ababa in February 2010, the participants urged, "*Education For All Partners [should] intensify efforts to support initiatives targeted at the most marginalized, such as cash transfers, school health and school feeding, scholarships and gender-specific-interventions."* Furthermore, school health and nutrition interventions have been recognised in addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of universal basic education and gender equality in educational access. In order to achieve these goals, it

is essential that even the poorest children, who suffer most from ill health and hunger, are able to attend school and learn while there. Disadvantaged children –the poor, the marginalized, girls, children in fragile states– often suffer the most from ill health and malnutrition and therefore benefit most from school health programs.

National governments have also prioritised school feeding programs for their social protection and social inclusion dimension. In the United Kingdom school feeding was the first component of the welfare reform in 1906. While in Brazil, the school feeding programme is prioritised within the Zero Hunger Strategy to address hunger and ensure the human right to adequate food for all. In fact today, there are at least 330 million children receiving school meals, in almost every country in the world and countries are investing approximately 30 billion dollars on school feeding every year (WFP, 2012).

The synergistic nature of school health and nutrition interventions, such as school based deworming and school feeding, suggests that when implemented together associated health and education benefits can be multiplied. School feeding can help to create an enabling environment for design and delivery of these other key public service delivery programmes. Given its cross sectoral content and wide ranging impact, school feeding programmes are usually well equipped to drive and support other interventions on education, nutrition, health, hunger and sanitation. A comprehensive approach to school health and nutrition is recognised by the Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) partners as a means of contributing to the health, nutrition and educational needs of children.

School health and nutrition programmes, particularly when embedded within broader child development strategies, are in integral part of the long term development of a child. As part of a continuum of development support, inclusive of maternal and child health as well as early child hood development, school health and nutrition programmes are a critical step to ensuring a child is able to reach their full potential.

School health and nutrition initiatives, such as school feeding, clearly contribute to the child rights framework as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OUNHCHR, 1989) inclusive of the right to food, the right to health and the right to education. However, there is even greater potential for school feeding programmes to contribute to the realisation of not only the socio-economic rights and development of the child, but the development of the community more broadly. As school feeding programmes run for a fixed number of days a year and have a predetermined food basket, they can also provide the opportunity to benefit farmers and producers by generating a structured and predictable demand for their products, thereby building the market and the enabling systems around it.

School feeding programmes illustrate the role education and schools have in the long term development of the country. This is most obvious through the education and health improvements of children, which lead to a greater earning potential later in life, thus breaking the cross-generational cycle of poverty. Additionally, when school feeding programmes provide a structured market for local agricultural production, there is an opportunity to boost local economies by reinvesting resources into the communities of the children these programmes are serving. In this way, school feeding programmes provide an opportunity for national governments to invest in the long term development of both children and the greater economic development of the community.

Background

The 2008 food, fuel and financial crises have highlighted the importance of school feeding programmes both as a social safety net for children living in poverty and food insecurity, and as part of national educational policies and plans. School feeding programs can help to get children into school and help to keep them there, through enhancing enrolment and reducing absenteeism; and once the children are in school, the programs can contribute to their learning, through avoiding hunger and enhancing cognitive abilities. These effects may be potentiated by complementary actions, especially deworming and providing micronutrients. As school feeding programmes run for a fixed number of days a year and have a predetermined food basket, they can also provide the opportunity to benefit farmers and producers by generating a structured and predictable demand for their products, thereby building the market and the enabling systems around it. This is the concept behind Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF), identified by the Millennium Hunger Task Force as a quick win in the fight against poverty and hunger and highlighting the broad potential benefits of school feeding programs when well planned. It is this opportunity to link to agriculture which has put Home Grown School Feeding as a priority within many national governments and as pillar four of the African Union Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

The 2009 analysis *Rethinking School Feeding* developed by the World Bank, World Food Programme and the Partnership for Child Development identified that every country for which we have information is seeking to provide food, in some way and at some scale, to its schoolchildren with coverage being most complete in the rich and middle income countries. In fact today, there are at least 330 million children receiving school meals, in almost every country in the world and countries are investing approximately 30 billion dollars on school feeding every year (WFP, 2012).

In the United Kingdom school feeding was the first component of the welfare reform in 1906. These reforms were the first step towards the modern welfare state in the UK, highlighting the social protection aspect of school feeding programmes. School feeding today is amongst the most extensive of welfare programmes in the USA, while the programmes in Brazil and India, which every day feed 57 million and 130 million children, respectively, have become the essence of presidential elections (Bundy et al, 2012). In Brazil, the national school feeding programme is reinforced within the framework of the Zero Hunger Strategy, one of the first initiatives launched by former President Lula in 2003 to fight hunger and poverty in Brazil. This again highlights the priority countries give to school feeding as effective social protection initiative.

Many of these national programmes have depended upon food commodities which are purchased locally thereby reinvesting the resources in the local economy and strengthening the economic base. In some countries this is occurring through a focus on the private sector generally, such as Chile, where nearly all rural school feeding is dependent upon local farmers, or through specific mandates requiring a link between school food and local agriculture, such as Brazil, where the national program requires education authorities to source 30% of their food from producers around the school (Buani and Peixinho, forthcoming 2012).

However, evidence shows that where the need is greatest, in terms of hunger, poverty and poor social indicators, the programmes tend to be the smallest. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (2012), only 2% of the money invested in school feeding

globally is invested in low income countries; And of the 2%, about 80% is donor funding. Past experience shows that countries do not seek to exit from providing food to their schoolchildren, but rather to transition from externally supported projects to nationally owned programs. Successful national school feeding programs in middle-income and high income countries tend to rely on local procurement of commodities, while programs in low-income countries usually find themselves dependent on external sources of food aid (Table 1). This suggests there is an opportunity for low-income countries to kick-start their transition, not only establishing sustainable sources for some of their commodities but also contributing to local economic development through school feeding programs which depend on local procurement.

Table 1: The Transition of School Feeding

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
	Programs rely mostly on external funding and implementation	→	→	→	Programs rely on government funding and implementation
Policy framework for school feeding	limited	increased	strong	strong	strong
Government financial capacity	limited	moderate	increased	strong	strong
Government institutional capacity	limited	limited	moderate	increased	strong
Countries	Afghanistan, CAR, DRC, Sudan, Zimbabwe	Malawi, Ethiopia, Haiti, Tanzania, Mali, Cambodia, Rwanda, Niger, Pakistan	Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Senegal	Lesotho, Ghana, El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras, Mauritania	Nigeria, India, Chile, Jamaica, Brazil, Botswana, Namibia

Source: Bundy DAP, Burbano C, Grosh M et al. (2009). *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector.* Joint publication of the World Food Programme and the World Bank Directions in Development. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Potential benefits of school feeding programs

The evidence around the education and health benefits of school feeding programmes is well understood. School feeding programmes can help to get children into school and help keep them there (Bundy et al, 2009). In addition, the broader benefits of school feeding programmes are recognised as a social protection intervention with favourable pro-poor outcomes (Devereux et al, 2010). It is clear that school feeding programmes can contribute to the realisation of principal socio-economic rights generally and also as specific constituents of the broader child rights framework as articulated in Convention on the Rights of the Child (OUNHCHR, 1989), which includes the right to food, the right to health and the right to education.

School feeding is a major social programme in most countries with a long history. However, the resulting benefits of the programme are intrinsically linked with the programme rational. Governments tend to enter into school feeding programmes for primarily social protection and educational purposes yet there are opportunities to increase additional benefits of the school feeding programmes, such as strong economic and agricultural developments, which also enhance programme sustainability.

By purchasing food through local suppliers, school feeding programmes are providing a structured demand for agricultural produce. This in turn can stimulate not only an increase in agricultural production, but an environment whereby smallscale farmers have more security and are thus able to take calculated risks to invest in their farming activities, such as through improved seeds, fertilizers and technologies.

The structured demand from the school feeding market can provide the incentive for smallholder farmers to invest in quantity and quality of production. It is this same farmer who will be able to send her children to school where they will receive a nutritious school meal, therefore increasing their educational attainment and ability to contribute as active citizens within their community. Therefore money is invested into the economic base while at the same time the next generation of farmers are becoming better equipped and informed. To truly understand the benefits of school feeding programmes, a cross-sectoral analysis of the benefits inclusive of agriculture, education, health, social protection and economics is needed.

Social protection

In 2008, the World Bank Group launched a Global Food Crisis Response Facility, mobilising $1.2 billion USD to provide immediate relief to countries impacted by the increased food prices. Many of these countries chose to invest this money into school feeding programmes. Meanwhile, the UN World Food Programme assisted 22 million children with school feeding in 70 countries. School feeding programmes are clearly emerging as a common social safety net response to crisis by assisting poor families and feeding hungry children (Bundy et al, 2009).

A tenth of the poorest children globally are least likely to attend school and most likely to contribute to the perpetuation of inter-generational cycles of poverty. These programs provide an incentive for poor children, a high vulnerability group, to go to school, and thus breaking this cycle. Keeping orphaned and vulnerable children in school can reduce their vulnerability, risk of contracting HIV and provide access to education of value especially for vulnerable young girls, who could grow up to be the next generation of smallholder farmers. The pro-poor nature of school feeding programmes highlights their role as a social protection initiative. Furthermore, targeting within these programmes can ensure that the most vulnerable children benefit, such as girls and those affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Social inclusion is a desired outcome for many school feeding programmes, perhaps most notably in countries such as Brazil, Chile, South Africa and India. In Brazil, through the Zero Hunger strategy, priority was given to fighting hunger and promoting this initiative which was intended to ensure the human right to adequate food to all. Key to this was fostering social inclusion, participation and citizenship rights through integrated policies. In South Africa, the National School Nutrition Programme was developed in the post-apartheid context and was led by the 1994 White paper on Reconstruction and Development with a

strong emphasis on redressing past inequities as also explicitly stated in the National Education Policy Act of 1996.

The delivery of food transfers to individuals who are poor and food insecure has the potential to alleviate immediate hunger. Evaluations of fortified biscuits programmes in Bangladesh and Indonesia found that gains in nutritional intake were not limited to the children actually receiving the biscuits at school. The two studies found significant evidence that school children shared the biscuits with their younger sister or brother at home. A recent RCT in Burkina Faso also found that take-home-ration programmes led to an improved of the nutritional status of younger siblings in beneficiary households (Adelman et al, 2008). In Uganda, an RCT also found significant improvements for pre-schooler siblings of children receiving school feeding (Kazianga et al, 2009). This provides emerging evidence of a spill-over effect and a window of opportunity to also affect children during a critical developmental stage when nutritional interventions can have the strongest impact.

School feeding programmes which purchase from smallholder farmers add another beneficiary group. If these farmers are themselves poor and food insecure, school feeding programmes has the potential to increase their household income and reduce food insecurity. The evidence on the impact on smallholder farmers is being strengthened through a number of impact evaluations currently underway (Masset and Gelli, 2011).

Health and education

Each year 200 to 500 million school days are estimated to be lost in low-income countries due to common health problems of schoolchildren, including worm infections, iron-deficiency anaemia and hunger (Bundy, 2011). A quality education for all requires that children are able to attend school regularly and be prepared to learn while there. It is for this reason that at the EFA meeting in Addis Ababa in February 2010, the participants urged, "*Education for All Partners [should] intensify efforts to support initiatives targeted at the most marginalized, such as cash transfers, school health and school feeding, scholarships and gender-specific-interventions."*

Evidence suggests that school feeding programs increase school attendance, cognition and educational achievement, particularly if supported by complementary actions such as deworming and micronutrient fortification or supplementation (Alderman and Bundy, 2011). School feeding programs can help to get children into school and help to keep them there, through enhancing enrolment and reducing absenteeism; and once the children are in school, the programs can contribute to their learning, through avoiding hunger and enhancing cognitive abilities (Adelman et al, 2008).

Additionally, school feeding programs improve children's health, especially when integrated into comprehensive school health and nutrition (SHN) programs. School based deworming, for example, is well understood to be a great platform for more comprehensive school health interventions as they are cost efficient and can easily be brought to scale (such as in Bihar India where 17 million children (80% of school age children) were dewormed within a 7 month period). Healthy, well-fed children learn better. School feeding—and SHN programs generally—are now widely recognized as significantly contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All.

Agriculture

The number of hungry people in the world is close to one billion, and food insecurity is increasing every day. Nowhere is this problem more acute than in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA),

where smallholder farmers lack modern production techniques. Even when they do adopt improved production methods, they are often unable to easily sell their produce in markets, which for smallholders, are often thin, and volatile. Efforts to enhance production are typically compromised by the lack of local markets for their products, and the absence of transport to reach distant markets with perishable goods. As school feeding programs run for a fixed number of days a year (on average 180) and normally have a pre-determined food basket, they provide the opportunity to benefit smallholder farmers and producers by generating a stable, structured, and predictable demand for their products, thereby building the market and the enabling systems around it (Gelli et al, 2010).

As programs expand and become nationally-owned and part of the national policy framework, the size and stability of the demand will also increase. This increased market security could encourage increased inputs into productivity-enhancing technologies and practices which will improve local agricultural production for smallholder farmers, many of whom are women. This in turn will have broader impacts on the local economy. Jobs and profits may be created not only for farmers, but for those involved in the transportation, processing, and preparation of food along the school feeding value chain. Off-farm investment may in turn further stimulate productivity and agricultural employment, producing a "virtuous cycle" benefitting long-term food security and improving welfare in rural households (Sumberg and Sabates Wheeler, 2011).

Cost-effectiveness

The evidence shows that the school system provides a cost-effective platform for delivering simple health interventions to school children, which optimize the benefits of education. Successfully leveraging this platform requires health, agriculture and education sectors to work closely together in a cross-sectoral partnership, which once established can serve as a foundation for more comprehensive school health programming. Formalizing this partnership has been shown to be the essential first step to driving the policy and implementation agenda for school health.

Furthermore, using schools as a platform, school health and nutrition programmes, such as school feeding, can be brought to scale to ensure national coverage, benefiting children, farmers and the broader community. Providing school health and nutrition interventions in parallel, such as deworming and school feeding, further multiplies the benefits and may increase the cost-effectiveness of these interventions.

The need for technical support to ensure the effectiveness of school feeding

School feeding programmes, particularly those which link with smallholder agricultural production, are incredibly broad in terms of objective and sector, crossing education, health and agriculture, which means an equally extensive, evidence based technical support package is required. Technical assistance requirements and intricacies are influenced by the diverse nature of programme designs that inform the calculation of programme cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

The transition from external funding and implementation to government owned and operated school feeding programs take time and planning. In Ecuador and El Salvador, for example, the transition happened over a period spanning 15 years during which there was constant

planning and communication between the government and the implementing entity – WFP (Bundy et al, 2012). Successful national school feeding programs in middle-income and high income countries tend to rely on local procurement of commodities, while programs in low-income countries usually find themselves dependent on external sources of food aid. This suggests there is an opportunity for low-income countries to kick-start their transition, not only establishing sustainable sources for some of their commodities but also contributing to local economic development through school feeding programs which depend on local procurement. At this juncture, an investment in catalytic technical support is needed to accelerate this process and enable governments to move forward in institutionalizing their school feeding programs in a systematic and sustainable manner. This enabling environment also provides an incentive for other donors to support government actions in school feeding (Bundy et al, 2012).

As countries grow economically, there is typically an increase in government capacity with regards to both finance and ability to implement. During this transition process, the policy and institutional frameworks within the country are strengthened; the relative costs of school feeding decline compared to the overall budget for education; reliance on external food and other resources shift to local procurement and business development; and government capacity to eventually fully manage and implement the program is increased (Bundy et al, 2009).

The main preconditions for the transition to sustainable national programs are mainstreaming school feeding in national policies and plans, especially education sector plans; identifying sustainable financing; and expanding national implementation capacity. A key message is the importance of both designing long-term sustainability into programs from their inception and of revisiting programs as they evolve. Countries benefit from having a clear understanding of the duration of donor assistance, a systematic strategy to strengthen institutional capacity, and a concrete plan for the transition to national ownership with time frames and milestones for the process (Bundy et al, 2012).

Recognising the need by country governments for technical assistance, a tripartite partnership has been developed between the World Bank, WFP and PCD to provide this much needed technical support. This partnership was created to support the design and implementation of nationally-owned school feeding programs which link to smallholder production, building on the strengths of each organization; WFP's technical experience, World Bank's engagement with governments through its financial, administrative and governance expertise, and PCD's experience in developing an evidence base for effective government-led interventions and engagement with local agricultural stakeholders. Building on the analysis done through *Rethinking School Feeding* (Bundy et al, 2009), the partnership provides technical support across the five internationally-agreed Standards of best practice for school feeding; policy framework, financial capacity, institutional capacity and coordination, design and implementation, and community participation.

Policy frameworks

A policy basis for a school feeding programme helps to ensure sustainability and the quality of implementation. Though the degree to which school feeding is articulated in national policy and legal frameworks vary from country to country, in all the cases where countries are implementing their own national programmes, school feeding is included in national policy frameworks. The largest programmes have the highest level of politicization, for example in India where the programme is supported by a Supreme Court Ruling and in Brazil where it is included in its Constitution. In many developing countries, school feeding is

mentioned in the countries' poverty reduction strategies, often linked to the agriculture, education, nutrition, or social protection sectors, or in sectoral policies or plans. National planning should ensure that the government has identified the most appropriate role for school feeding in its development agenda (Bundy et al, 2009).

Financial capacity

With a general move toward decentralization, government planning processes often start with village-level priority setting, which becomes translated into local government (district) development plans. These plans form the basis for budgeting at national level, making sure there is compliance with the national poverty reduction strategy and sectoral plans. The degree to which school feeding is included in this planning and budgeting process will determine whether the programme receives resources from the national budget and whether it benefits from general budget support allocations. In most countries with external support, funding for the programme comes from food assistance channelled through external agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and from government in-kind or cash contributions. As the programme becomes a national programme, it needs to have a stable funding source independent of external support. This may be through government core resources or through long term development funding. Stable funding is a prerequisite for sustainability (Bundy et al, 2009).

Institutional capacity and coordination

The implementation of a school feeding programme is generally the responsibility of a specific government institution or ministry. However, cross-sectoral collaboration is needed to ensure impact and efficiencies. Best practice suggests that school feeding programmes are better implemented if there is an institution that is mandated and accountable for the implementation of such a programme. This institution requires adequate resources, managerial skills, staff, knowledge, and technology at central- and sub-national levels to correctly implement the programme (Bundy et al, 2009).

Design and implementation

School feeding programmes should be designed based on a thorough assessment of the situation in a particular country. Problems, the objectives, and the expected outcomes need to be clearly identified in a manner that corresponds to the country's specific context. Targeting also needs to be considered to ensure the programme reaches the right beneficiaries while at the same time considering programme efficiency and modalities such food delivery and a food basket of the right quality. Complementary actions such as food fortification and deworming as well as other school health initiatives should be a standard part of any school feeding programme. School feeding requires a robust implementation arrangement that can procure and deliver large quantities of food to targeted schools, ensure the quality of the food, and manage resources in a transparent way (Bundy et al, 2009).

Community participation

School feeding programmes which respond to community needs, are locally-owned, and which incorporate some form of parental or community contribution, whether cash payment or in kind, tend to be the strongest programmes and the ones most likely to make a successful transition to government owned. Programmes which ensure community participation from the beginning as well as mechanisms to consistently maintain engagement have the most success (Bundy et al, 2009).

Going beyond school feeding

School feeding is one part of a wider school health and nutrition agenda which should be considered holistically based on the contextual needs of a country. For sustainability, school feeding should be embedded within the broader national school health and nutrition policies, ensuring that focus and priority is given to the overall health and education of children.

In addition, school feeding can help to create an enabling environment for design and delivery of other key public service delivery programmes. Given its cross sectoral content and wide ranging impact, school feeding programmes are usually well equipped to drive and support other interventions on education, nutrition, health, hunger and sanitation. In countries such as India the programme runs in close convergence with national rural health and sanitation programmes, rural water supply programme, sanitation programmes and the nation-wide education for all initiative.

A comprehensive approach to school health and nutrition is recognised by the Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) partners as a means of contributing to the health, nutrition and educational needs of children. The synergistic nature of school based deworming and school feeding, for example, suggests that when implemented together associated benefits are multiplied, therefore providing a sound basis to make schools healthier for children. Through designing comprehensive school health and nutrition programmes that incorporate school feeding and deworming to reduce hunger and improve nutrition as well as screening for easily treatable medical conditions such as refractive error, low hearing and dental problems the interventions can have an even higher impact on education as more children are able to reach their full potential. Through combining school health and nutrition interventions into a cohesive package they can be managed in a comprehensive and methodical manner that ensures even the most vulnerable children are reached.

In recent times the importance of addressing disability as well as disease and deficiency in school children has come to the forefront as a key component of school health interventions. The number of children with disabilities worldwide is currently estimated at between 93 (WHO, 2004) and 150 million (UNICEF, 2005); data is sparse and precise numbers are unsure although estimates note that around four fifths of those children live in developing countries (UNESCO, 2010). Many of these children are not in school and the evidence shows that children with disabilities are less likely to be in school than their peers who are not disabled (Filmer, 2008). This difference in school attendance between children with disabilities and non-disabled children varies wildly from country to country; for example, in India the difference at primary school level is 10% while in Indonesia it stands at 60%.

Education as a basic human right was first defined in the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and this has since been expanded on through the multi-stakeholder Global Partnership for Education and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD which recognised the right of all children with disabilities to be included in mainstream education and receive the individual support they need. As the World Health Organisation notes in its recent World Disability Report 2011:

> "*Ensuring that children with disabilities receive good quality education in an inclusive environment should be a priority of all countries. Systemic change to remove barriers and provide reasonable accommodation and support services is*

required to ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from mainstream educational opportunities." (WHO, 2011)

As with other vulnerable groups, school feeding and other school health and nutrition programmes, can support efforts to ensure children with disabilities have access to education within an inclusive environment.

Conclusions

Each year 200 to 500 million school days are estimated to be lost in low-income countries due to common health problems of schoolchildren, including worm infections, iron-deficiency anemia and hunger (Bundy et al, 2009). A quality education for all requires that children are able to attend school regularly and be prepared to learn while there. The school system provides an effective platform for delivering simple health interventions to school children, such as school feeding and deworming, which optimize the benefits of education.

The synergistic nature of many school based health interventions suggests that when implemented together, associated benefits to both health and education are multiplied. Through designing comprehensive school health and nutrition programmes that incorporate school feeding and deworming to reduce hunger and improve nutrition as well as screening for easily treatable medical conditions such as refractive error, low hearing and dental problems the interventions can have an even higher impact on education as more children are able to reach their full potential.

It is for this reason that at the EFA meeting in Addis Ababa in February 2010, the participants urged, "*Education For All Partners [should] intensify efforts to support initiatives targeted at the most marginalized, such as cash transfers, school health and school feeding, scholarships and gender-specific-interventions."* Furthermore, school health and nutrition interventions have been recognised as an effective method to address the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of universal basic education and gender equality in educational access. In order to achieve these goals, it is essential that even the poorest children, who suffer most from ill health and hunger, are able to attend school and learn while there.

The multiplying effect when considering the benefits of complementary school health and nutrition interventions are further increased when these programmes are embedded within broader child development policies and programmes.

"Programs at school age are thus part of a continuum of supportive programs, from MCH [Maternal and Child Health] during fetal development and infancy, through ECD [Early Child Development] in early childhood, and finally to school health and nutrition programmes as a component of EFA." (Bundy, 2011)

This life-cycle approach to child development is in line with the current child development strategies in China, which focus on of providing more equitable educational opportunities for poor children through early child development and through school health and school feeding programs. Efforts are also made to ensure child development is inclusive of more than just direct education and health interventions. In 2009, CDRF published a milestone report entitled *Eliminating Poverty through Development in China*. This analysis by some 20 distinguished China scholars examines why and where poverty still exists in China, despite considerable public efforts to alleviate poverty and impressive economic growth. The report

suggests that poverty alleviation strategies should not only focus on the existing poor, but should specifically address the needs of the offspring of the poor, with the aim of preventing poverty from spreading from one generation to the next. This report emphasises the need to help children to grow up with enhanced abilities to fully embrace development through improved access to education, health, culture and social protection.

School health and nutrition initiatives, such as school feeding, clearly contribute to the child rights framework as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OUNHCHR, 1989) inclusive of the right to food, the right to health and the right to education. However, there is even greater potential for school feeding programmes to contribute to the realisation of not only the socio-economic rights and development of the child, but the development of the community more broadly. As school feeding programmes run for a fixed number of days a year and have a predetermined food basket, they can also provide the opportunity to benefit farmers and producers by generating a structured and predictable demand for their products, thereby building the market and the enabling systems around it.

School feeding programmes illustrate the role education and schools have in the long term development of the country. This is most obvious through the education and health improvements of children, which lead to a greater earning potential later in life, thus breaking the cross-generational cycle of poverty. Additionally, when school feeding programmes provide a structured market for local agricultural production, there is an opportunity to boost local economies by reinvesting resources into the communities of the children these programmes are serving. In this way, school feeding programmes provide an opportunity for national governments to invest in the long term development of both children and the greater economic development of the community.

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