



INTERNATIONAL  
FOOD  
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INSTITUTE

sustainable options for ending hunger and poverty

# FOOD FOR EDUCATION





In the developing world, 200 million children under five years of age are malnourished. Most of these children live in abject poverty, have not had enough to eat since birth, and will never complete primary school.

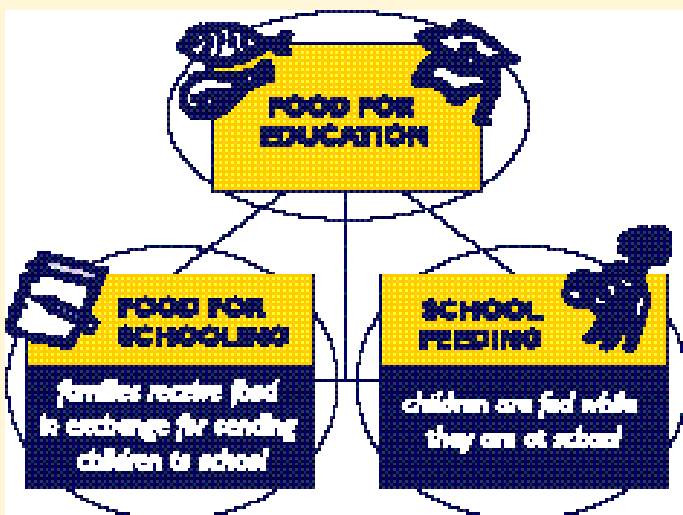
Sadly, without education, their future will undoubtedly be as bleak as their past, and their children's future will be a distressing echo of their own. The intergenerational transmission of poverty is insidious and persistent. Governments in developing countries strive to improve their national economies, but where a large number of people are poor, food insecure, and uneducated, economic development is difficult and slow.

For the food-insecure child, the pathway out of poverty is constricted. From birth, poor children are often deprived of the basic nutritional building blocks that they need in order to learn easily. And poverty has kept generations of families from sending their children to school. Because day-to-day survival has to be their first priority, families often cannot provide children with educational opportunities that could

help lift them from destitution. Even if schooling is free, costs such as books and other school materials, clothes, shoes, and transportation can be a heavy economic burden. In many poor families, children must contribute to the household's livelihood. Children often have to work in the fields or care for younger siblings so that their parents can earn an income away from home. Some children even work themselves as day laborers. In a nutshell, many children in developing countries bring direct or indirect income into the household—income that can make a difference between one or two meals a day for the family.

Throughout the world, governments have used food subsidies to improve the welfare of needy populations. Today, rather than just handing out food, governments are increasingly using food as an instrument for reaching development goals, such as education for all, while also reducing hunger among the poor. They are not only feeding people, they are feeding development.

Food for Education programs have been implemented in two basic forms: children are fed in school (School Feeding Programs), or families are given food if their children attend school (Food for Schooling Programs). Both programs combine educational opportunity with food-based incentives. And both programs use food as an incentive for parents to send their children to school. Food for Education programs provide immediate sustenance for the hungry, but perhaps more importantly, they empower future generations by educating today's children. In many countries of the developing world, these programs are providing opportunity where there once was none.



# SCHOOL FEEDING

## ENABLING CHILDREN TO LEARN

Hunger is a barrier to learning. School Feeding programs throughout the world have successfully attracted children to school and retained them by offering them what they would probably not get elsewhere: hot food or nourishing snacks. The primary objective of a School Feeding program is to provide meals or snacks to alleviate short-term hunger, enabling children to learn. A hungry child cannot concentrate. A hungry child cannot perform. Hungry children are unlikely to stay in school. School-based feeding programs have proven effective in encouraging enrollment, increasing attention spans, and improving attendance in school.



# FOOD FOR SCHOOLING

## REACHING OUT TO THE FAMILY

But what happens to a child's hunger when he or she goes home? And what about family members who are not fed at school? Or adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women whose nutrition directly affects the health of their offspring? Or malnourished preschoolers? Can a Food for Education program reduce hunger at home, while also encouraging children to go to school? Can development assistance link education to food to help address hunger at its root cause—poverty?

Food for Schooling was designed to develop long human capability by making the transfer of resources to a household contingent upon primary school enrollment of children. Food for Schooling programs provide a free ration of food to poor households as long as primary

school-age children attend school. The free Food for Schooling monthly foodgrain ration becomes an income entitlement that enables poor families to release children from household obligations so they can go to school. In effect, by sending children to school, families earn grain that can be used to feed all family members, young and old, or they can sell the grain for cash to buy other needed goods such as clothing or medicine. Instead of feeding a child at school, Food for Schooling is designed to help feed the entire family.



	Food for Schooling	School Feeding
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus: Reduces long-term hunger and educates children.</li> <li>• Gives food to needy families.</li> <li>• Transfers income to poor families: food can be sold to purchase other critical needs or family food budget can be reduced.</li> <li>• Provides strong incentive to send children to school.</li> <li>• Encourages children to stay in school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus: Reduces short-term hunger and educates children.</li> <li>• Increases child's learning capability in the classroom.</li> <li>• Provides incentive to send children to school.</li> <li>• Encourages children to stay in school.</li> </ul>
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not alleviate short-term hunger so that a child can learn in class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't benefit the preschoolers or adults in the family.</li> </ul>

### A COMBINED APPROACH

Together, School Feeding and Food for Schooling programs are powerful tools for alleviating day-to-day hunger pains and reducing food shortages within households, helping children learn while in school, and creating opportunities for families to send children to school and to keep them there. By combining the two programs, governments can alleviate hunger, feed development, and reduce poverty in the long run. Children need food to learn; families need food to make the most of education.

# IFPRI'S WORK IN THIS AREA

For seven years IFPRI has been working with the government of Bangladesh to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate the world's first Food for Schooling program. Using quantitative and qualitative research techniques and extensive household surveys, IFPRI has evaluated the Food for Schooling pilot program to determine how much it has improved the livelihoods of poor households in Bangladesh. For more detailed information on the findings of these evaluations, go to IFPRI's website at <http://www.ifpri.org>.



Photo credits: World Bank—Curt Carnemark; Tomas Sennett; Curt Carnemark



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