



SCHOOL FEEDING AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN ARMENIA



In 2020, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Armenia celebrates the 10-years anniversary of the School Feeding programme. Every day for ten years, thanks to the financial support from the Russian Federation and the RA Government resources, 100,000 school children across Armenia receive daily nutritious meals to help them grow into healthy and productive adults. Over the last ten years, the programme has supported children's food security, invested in communities' development and supported local economic growth with the vision to fully nationalize the programme to make results sustainable for the years to come.

The first edition of this newsletter focuses on how the School Feeding programme directly supports the Human Capital development in Armenia to invest in the future generations of the country.

THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME'S POSITIVE IMPACTS ON HUMAN CAPITAL

The Human capital is a set of knowledge and skills, social and personal characteristics that increase a person's productivity.

Most of an individual's Human Capital is developed early during his or her life. This via education and healthy lifestyles, including access to health services and the consumption of nutritious food to become healthy and productive members of the society.



In Armenia, the Human Capital Index of children is 0.57 out of 1. Meaning that when adults, they will be 57% as productive as they could be if enjoying a complete education and health, including access and consumption of nutritionally diversified food.

Therefore, WFP and the Government of Armenia with the support from Russian Federation have developed the School Feeding programme to invest and improve children's food security, their health, quality and duration of education.

Together with partners WFP is committed to support the Armenian society ensuring inclusive approaches to education and health, thus giving everyone equal opportunities to achieve their full potential.

SCHOOL FEEDING IMPROVES THE FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTH OF CHILDREN

To support children to become healthy and productive at school, WFP and the Government of Armenia are providing every day 100,00 children with nutritionally balanced and diversified meals.

With the support from the Russian Federation, since 2010 WFP distributed 23,000 Mt of food and USD 1.5 million to schools for them to purchase nutritious products such as fruits and vegetables from local farmers and markets.

In 2019 only, 18 million meals have been prepared via WFP's distributions of 2,550 Mt of food and the transfer of approx. 130,000 USD to schools.

By allowing children to focus on their classes rather than their stomachs, the programme supports the future generations of Armenia to be healthy and productive at school.

Ms. Lilit Hovhannisyan, the principal of Myasnikyan School in Armavir is convinced WFP School Feeding has lots of benefits both for children and their health.



"In 2015, the introduction of WFP's School Feeding programme in our school was a real turning point for children. Eating together at one table gives kids an opportunity for friendly social interaction. I noticed that less children feel sick – some of them used to feel dizzy in the mornings, now there is less of that. Children really enjoy meals as they have healthy and nutritious food every day and the programme helps them to develop good eating habits and solves many social problems, particularly for disadvantaged families."



**18 MILLION
NUTRITIOUS MEALS**

SCHOOL FEEDING SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

For adults and children alike, consuming balanced meals every day is key to be healthy and have enough energy to be productive. At the same time, children become livelier in the classroom, easily engaged in one to one or group communications and in meaningful activities that support their development.

In addition to daily balanced meals, WFP is also investing to improve the nutrition education of children for them to develop healthy habits and become aware citizens that care of their health and nutrition status when they will become adults.

Together with the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, WFP has designed nutrition education and healthy lifestyles curricula as part of children's education. What is more, parents will also be part of nutrition communications campaigns to improve the family's adoption of good nutrition practices and transfer this knowledge to their children.

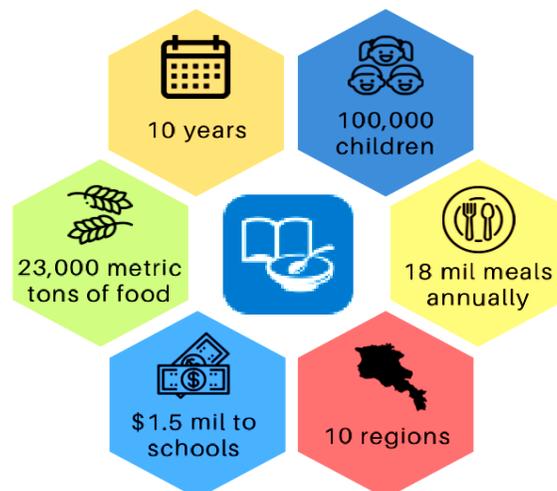
This year, WFP conducted a study to demonstrate the positive impacts of healthy eating habits on children's education. The results were very promising: when children, particularly underweight and those coming from most vulnerable families, receive morning snacks before starting the school day, their cognitive abilities and school experience improve.



Moreover, when malnourished children or those coming from vulnerable families have access to food in the morning and at lunch, they narrow down the inequality gap with peers coming from more privileged families and start to perform better in their studies.

Through the programme, schools become the place where vulnerable families can receive support and incentives to address inequalities, and ensure equal access to nutrition and inclusive education.

Thanks to the support from the Russian Federation, the Government of Armenia and WFP, children in Armenia receive daily meals, which supports their development and helps to gain essential skills and competences to access the labour market when they become adults.



HUMAN CAPITAL IN ACTION: FROM SCHOOL FEEDING TO WFP



A story from Syuzanna Siradeghyan, Monitoring and Evaluation assistant with WFP

“In 2001 I was a 7th-grade schoolgirl in beautiful yet strongly conflict-affected village of Voskepar, Tavush. One day, the school announced that a charitable organization would have started providing hot meals to all schoolchildren. For us, it was very unusual since at the time we were not even receiving dry meals, left alone hot and nutritious ones!

According to the programme, thanks to the support from the Russian Federation and WFP, the school would receive wheat flour, oil and lentils which, together with fresh products, would be used to prepare healthy meals every day.

From then onwards, my friends and I started to have lunch every day at school and be much more energetic, learning more and better in class.

I still remember how before this day, my friends and I were skipping breakfast and would get to midday feeling exhausted.

“ ***It was not just a meal but a belief in humanity.*** ”

This made me start thinking that there is an outside world made of people and institutions that were caring for us and committed to our future. For us to be healthy and educated with the possibility to become who and what we want to be when adults. This is how I discovered the World Food Programme and its mission around the world, including in Armenia. It was not just a meal but a belief in humanity and hope for development. To me, this has been the first example of the role of the Civil Society and of International Organizations in bringing a change to the lives of people .

15 years after graduating from school, being a PhD student and with my years of research work experience, **my path crossed WFP again.**

From the kid that was part of the School Feeding programme I am now a Monitor and Evaluation Assistant with WFP, and this is not a coincidence.

Every time I visit a school to monitor the positive impacts of the programme, I find myself in the eyes of children.

My mentor once said that there is much that could be done and to give meaning to one’s life. I believe this is my chance to live a meaningful life and play a role in the change we envision for the future generations of Armenia.”