



National School Feeding Policy

GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA

Produced by the **Ministry of Education**



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Foreword

Liberia social and economical development and its prosperity are closely associated to its capacity to bear the fruits resulting from consolidated peace and stability and investment in its human capital in order to overcome the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger and pave the way for steady growth.

Education is a major priority of the Government of Liberia that is resolutely determined to remove all barriers to education and promote gender equality by making unprecedented investment that will provide free and compulsory quality basic education to all.

School Feeding has been largely recognized as a determinant contributor to improving the quality of education in Liberia and increasing access to it, and enhancing nutrition, gender equality and other socio-economic benefits. School Feeding is a vital safety net for the most vulnerable and food insecure households accounting for a third of national social protection spending.

Closely aligned to Liberia Vision 2030 and UNDAF, the National School Feeding Policy is a benchmark that provides a robust framework that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme and lays solid ground to develop national capacity in planning, implementing and managing the programme. The policy is the result of broad consultations and consolidation of international agreements with development partners and other national policies establishing school feeding as an effective safety net.

We are confident that the policy will result in maximizing the benefits of the school feeding programme and facilitate coordination among stakeholders during the transition to a nationally owned and sustainable government programme.



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1 Introduction

1.1 ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL FEEDING POLICY

This policy, the first of its kind in Liberia, establishes the principles to be adhered to in planning, implementing and managing the National School Feeding Programme and sets out the roles and responsibilities of ministries and international and national stakeholders. One of its initial purposes is to facilitate coordination among stakeholders during the transition to a nationally owned government programme.

The policy consolidates international agreements and other national policies in establishing school feeding as an effective safety net. It is intended to improve the quality of education in Liberia and increase access to it, and to enhance nutrition, gender equality and other socio-economic benefits. To ensure sustainability and effectiveness, school feeding throughout Liberia will comply with this policy, which:

- a. establishes the ways in which the National School Feeding Programme will improve education indicators such as enrolment and retention rates in basic education;
- b. specifies the mandates of school feeding programme institutions at all levels;
- c. enhances transparency and prevents duplication in the implementation of school feeding;
- d. determines lines of accountability and provides a code of conduct;
- e. facilitates access to funding to support the National School Feeding Programme;
- f. facilitate the transition to government ownership of the National School Feeding Programme; and
- g. supports local agriculture with a view to achieving a paradigm shift in agricultural practices and hence enhancing food security.

The National School Feeding Programme will increase children's access to education by ensuring that food insecurity is not an obstacle to their cognitive and physical development. The Ministry of Education therefore requires its education officers, school principals, administrators, teachers and staff to ensure that the provisions of the National Policy on School Feeding are respected and adhered to, and calls upon other ministries and partners for their support.

The objective of the Government's Education Sector Plan is to "put in place provisions and structures such that no individual is denied the possibility of primary education because of age, language or circumstances". One of its main strategies is the provision of school feeding.

The extensive international policy support for school feeding is demonstrated in various international declarations. The 2005 United Nations Millennium Project recommends that school feeding be expanded to reach all children in "hunger hotspots". School feeding addresses the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to hunger and poverty, education and gender equality and has contributed to the goals of the Education for All declaration of the Dakar Framework for Action, which was signed at the 2000 World Education Forum and endorsed at the 2007 Dakar High-Level Group on Education for All. School feeding was included in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme adopted by the New Partnership for Africa's Development in 2003, and was endorsed at the 2006 African Union Food Security Summit in Abuja. School feeding was a feature of the Africa/European Union Summit Action Plan for 2008–2010. More recently, school feeding has been incorporated into action plans and declarations responding to rising food prices such as statements made by the G-8 summits in which school feeding is

recognized as an important safety net in addressing hunger.¹

1.2 THE SCHOOL FEEDING POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This National School Feeding Policy is supported by recent national policy documents that build a strong case for school feeding. The 2008–2011 Poverty Reduction Strategy provides for increases in the numbers of qualified teachers and classrooms and the quantities of school supplies, revision of the curriculum and the provision of school feeding programmes with a view to improving enrolment and retention rates. The New Education Reform Act of 2011 states that basic education shall be free in government primary and junior secondary schools, and provides for legal action against any parent or guardian who neglects to send a child aged 6–18 to school. School feeding is a unique strategy for attracting children to school, complementing the Education Reform Act.

The 2010–2020 Education Sector Plan notes that poor nutrition among schoolchildren is a major contributing factor to inadequate educational performance, dropout rates and increased morbidity and mortality. Proper nutrition in schools is necessary to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. The draft School Fee Abolition Policy recommends that school feeding should eventually be taken over by the Ministry of Education because it has significant implications for attendance and dropout rates, and provides for the transfer of the actual costs of education to schools through grants. The National Girls Education Policy complements school feeding in that it aims to achieve gender parity: it will enable girls to complete their schooling by ensuring that education is free and by mobilizing the

Ministry of Education and communities to ensure gender parity.

With regard to nutrition, the 2010 comprehensive food security and nutrition survey (CFSNS) focuses on eradicating poverty and food insecurity in Liberia by providing free school meals and extending the school feeding campaign to the most food-insecure counties. Its components promote increased access by families to water and sanitation facilities, improved hygiene, adequate iron and vitamin A intake and activities to promote child health. The national School Feeding Code of Conduct produced by the Ministry of Education stipulates the roles and responsibilities of all teachers, school administrators and parents, with the actions to be taken in cases of misconduct – including sexual abuse or exploitation – and establishes measures to ensure adherence to proper management of the National School Feeding Programme, its resources, facilities and properties.² A draft Professional Code of Conduct for teachers sets out their roles and responsibilities and the actions to be taken against teachers who violate the code.

In its Education Sector Plan, the Government of Liberia prioritizes Education in Emergencies as a fundamental right of children with a view to providing protection, psychological recovery, social re-integration and growth and development for school-aged children experiencing conflict or its after-effects. Education in Emergencies is particularly important for Liberia in view of

¹ WFP/EB.2/2009/4-A.

² The Code of Conduct sets out obligations and penalties for non compliance in the following areas: food storage and storage facilities; food management and utilization, including food rationing, underfeeding and denial of food; girls' take-home rations; non-food items; record keeping and reporting; hygiene and sanitation. Penalties include removal of a school's authority, suspension of a school until the Ministry of Education expresses in writing its satisfaction as to the proper implementation of the school feeding programme, or the deletion of the school from the school feeding roster. A school principal may face prosecution for certain offences.

its turbulent history and the sporadic conflicts in surrounding countries.

In times of shock, children are often withheld from school because families are under considerable duress: in such cases Emergency School Feeding provides school meals for children during or immediately after a major shock with a view to stabilizing enrolment by addressing short-term hunger.

Education in Emergencies and Emergency School Feeding will be included in a forthcoming contingency plan being developed by the Ministry of Education. This policy recognizes that school feeding can be critical during emergencies by providing meals to offset the cost of feeding children at home.

1.3 EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

1.3.1 Education

Liberia's national education system is in a period of post-war transition: the institutional framework is weak, the quality of instruction is inadequate and access to education is limited as a result of years of civil conflict. Despite the decision of the Government of Liberia to shift education costs away from households by providing free and compulsory education, many social and economic opportunity costs remain. Parents continue to face numerous challenges in providing for their children's education. In the prevailing socio-economic situation, children continue to play a crucial role in household food security and contribute to household incomes and livelihoods. Children in rural and urban contexts are engaged in unskilled labour such as mining and in the informal sectors of the economy.

In view of the high unemployment and illiteracy rates and of the current economic and social constraints, it is a challenge to motivate parents to send their children to school, even where it is free. An integrated

multi-sector approach to free and compulsory primary education is needed to improve the provision of basic education services and increase accessibility, and to meet the resulting demand for school enrolment.

In spite of major challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers and limited access to quality schooling, the education sector has made some progress in recent years. Between 2001 and 2007 the gross enrolment rate for primary education increased from 56 percent to 86 percent – for girls it increased from 35 percent to 84 percent. In 2009 the net enrolment rate increased by 10 percent – 9 percent for girls and 12 percent for boys – compared with the previous year. According to the 2009 National School Census Report, the net enrolment rate in primary schools remains at 42 percent, with only a third of primary schoolchildren reaching grade 5. The Liberian education system has a significant number of over-age students in primary and junior secondary schools, and a large number of young people in accelerated learning programmes (ALPs).

One of the reasons for the major difference between gross enrolment and net enrolment is the primary education completion rate, which is only 37 percent. Because net enrolment is the MDG indicator for education, and because only a third of schoolchildren complete grade 5, the 2015 goal of children completing a full course of primary education will be a challenge in Liberia. Interestingly, the 2010 CFSNS indicated significantly higher enrolment rates in food-secure households compared with food-insecure households: 45 percent of children aged 6–11 from food-insecure households were out of school, whereas 25 percent of children in the same age group from food-secure households were out of school.

1.3.1.1 Girls' Education

This policy imposes gender equity objectives and strategies. Girls still lag behind boys in enrolment, retention and completion rates at all levels of education. Gender disparities among school-aged children are significant beyond the age of 14, resulting in a gender parity index of 0.88 at the primary level and only 0.69 at the senior high-school level. Adult literacy rates outside Monrovia are unequal in that only 33 percent of women are literate compared with 60 percent of men.

The 2010 CFSNS showed that food consumption scores in households headed by women were less than those in households headed by literate individuals or by men. The prevalence of under-nutrition is greatest – 15 percent – among women aged 15–19: this is a worrying trend in Liberia, where teenage pregnancy is common. Early marriage, domestic labour and teenage pregnancies constitute barriers to gender equality in school enrolment, and illiteracy among parents reinforces gender-biased cultural practices.

1.3.1.2 Decentralization

A national school feeding policy is particularly necessary at this time in view of the ongoing decentralization of the Ministry of Education and the expanding role of county education officers (CEOs) in planning, implementing and monitoring education-sector interventions and school feeding. The implementation and management of a National School Feeding Programme involves a range of inter-ministerial actors and ministries, particularly the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and stakeholders at the community level. The roles and responsibilities of ministries are included in this policy.

1.3.2 Food Security, Child Morbidity

Providing food should not take priority over a child's attendance at school. This policy will reduce the additional costs for families by providing a value transfer: a daily meal is a strong incentive for Liberian families to send children to school regularly.

The 2010 CFSNS reported that 55.8 percent of households used coping strategies to access sufficient food: 35 percent relied on less-preferred food, and 32 percent consumed smaller portions; 15 percent of families reduced the number of meals per day, and 10 percent borrowed food; 3 percent of households consumed no meals during the day. The survey also reported that 41 percent of the population had an “unacceptable” level of food consumption, which means they consumed insufficient nutritious foods to maintain an active and healthy life; 13 percent of the population survived solely on rice, roots and tubers.

Child morbidity in Liberia is high: only 36 percent of the children in the 2010 CFSNS sample had had no illness in the two weeks preceding the interview, with higher rates of child illness in rural areas. Children suffering from diarrhoea, coughs, fever or a combination of these had statistically higher levels of malnutrition. Poor sanitation and lack of clean water correlate highly with child morbidity.

2 School Feeding in Liberia

2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL FEEDING POLICY

This policy upholds the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Government of Liberia and the objectives of the 2010–2020 Education Sector Plan. The School Feeding Programme seeks to contribute to poverty reduction and food security through increased and improved access to basic education. It will complement free and compulsory education, increase access to and equity in quality education and reduce dropouts from basic education.

The policy will lead to mutually reinforcing outcomes that will help to lift households out of poverty, end the inter-generational cycle of hunger and encourage parents to keep their children in school. By investing in human capital through education, school feeding reduces vulnerability to hunger and protects and promotes livelihoods. Few safety-net programmes provide such a range of multi-sector benefits: school feeding is linked to health, nutrition and other social protection safety nets, and involves a range of stakeholders and partners. The school feeding policy transfers a resource to households in the value of the food distributed and increases household food availability. The value transfer will help poor households in particular to access resources and avoid negative coping strategies such as taking children out of school for agricultural or economic purposes. This policy promotes a transformation in which Liberian children and young people will grow up with new attitudes to agricultural development in a society without corruption that adheres to the rule of law. The policy will promote:

a. **Access to education for all Liberian children.** Enrolment, attendance, completion and promotion rates will be encouraged with the provision of

nutritious, balanced daily school meals as an incentive to improve children's attendance throughout an academic year, leading to improved academic performance and educational attainment; dropout rates will decrease accordingly.

- b. **Enhanced nutrition and health.** Balanced meals fortified with micronutrients will improve the health of Liberia's primary schoolchildren and decrease morbidity, paving the way for a healthier life.³ School feeding alleviates hunger in school and enhances nutrition, thus increasing the potential to improve children's health, academic performance and educational attainment.
- c. **Gender equity.** The most vulnerable children will be targeted: school feeding contributes to social equity and addresses gender and social inequalities in education through communities, parents and teachers. This policy will reduce household expenditures on food and thus encourage families to send daughters, vulnerable children and orphans to school. When girls are educated they are more likely to have fewer and healthier children. The take-home ration (THR) component will also promote gender equity by targeting areas with high gender disparities in schools: school feeding will reduce the gender gap in schools by enabling parents to send girls to school as well as boys.
- d. **Capacity development.** This policy will improve social cohesion in communities and schools by promoting participation in school resource management, parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and projects to

³ The 2010 CFSNS found that child morbidity was high: only 36 percent of the children in the sample had had no illness in the preceding two weeks. Counties with the highest prevalence of child illness were Rural Montserrado, Nimba, Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh and Grand Kru, where 80 percent of children had suffered from at least one illness during the recall period.

develop school infrastructures. Schools will become centres of excellence for communities, which will experience the benefits of being organized around development activities.

- e. This objective is linked to the next in that eventual local purchases of food for school feeding will promote sustainable development by supporting reliable markets for small farmers and producers. When farmers are empowered through school feeding mechanisms, the gains in food security and nutritional enhancement trickle down to children and offset the opportunity cost of sending children to school. Local food purchases for school feeding will create synergies with agricultural programmes and address children's educational needs.
- f. **A culture that appreciates Liberian agriculture.** The National School Feeding Policy will promote a paradigm shift in attitudes to agriculture through interventions such as school gardens and a curriculum that promotes agricultural awareness, knowledge and skills. School feeding facilitates community participation in small-scale interventions that result in long-term support for school feeding, for example by maintaining school gardens. If education is linked with the environment, children learn to love their land, environment and heritage, and they will become its future guardians. This is discussed further in section 3.5.

2.1.1 A Corruption-Sensitive Liberian Society

This policy will help new generations to stand firm against the chronic and widespread corruption in Liberia, which also affects the National School Feeding Programme. Ending Liberia's mentality of corruption will be difficult, and there is concern that the problem and the associated behaviours could be passed on to the next generation. In the context of school feeding, the problem starts with inflated enrolment

figures on which food allocations are based. Under this new policy, school feeding will provide opportunities for engagement among communities, school administrations and students on governance issues and codes of conduct with a view to increasing accountability and reducing corruption. This will protect school feeding resources and help to create in young people a sensitivity to corruption and a willingness to speak out against it. Because children learn from their environment, it is critical that schools serve as positive role models: an objective of the National School Feeding Policy is that young people should grow up to be staunchly intolerant of corruption and that the places where they interact and spend most of their time should be free of corruption.

2.2 TRANSITION TO A GOVERNMENT-LED NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

The current school feeding programme is implemented by various organizations under different circumstances (see Annex C). This policy addresses the need for transition to a formal National School Feeding Programme that will be fully owned and implemented by the Ministry of Education, with support as needed from partners. International partners will continue to support the Government of Liberia with capacity development and funding to address resource gaps during the transition period. This will be based on systematic assessment of the capacity of the Ministry of Education to run the National School Feeding Programme. In particular the World Food Programme (WFP), which has extensive experience with school feeding, will continue to assist the ministry in planning and implementing activities during the transition to a national programme. The Ministry of Education will therefore prepare the procedures and timeframe for gradual transition to a nationally-owned and implemented school feeding programme.

2.3 FINANCING OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

This policy envisages a transition to a National School Feeding Programme owned and primarily funded by the Government of Liberia in line with Liberia's economic performance and the 2012–2015 Poverty Reduction Strategy. To this end, the Government of Liberia will work with development partners supporting the programme to secure the resources required to run the programme during the transition period. The Government of Liberia will give partners at least two years' notice of its readiness to assume full ownership of the programme.

The ministries involved in the National School Feeding Programme will seek stable funding and budgets, which are prerequisites for long-term sustainability. The inclusion of a school feeding budget line in national planning and budgeting will be based on the incremental targets set by the Government of Liberia and the Ministry of Education to achieve Education for All.

As part of the budget exercise, the Ministry of Education will include budget lines for salaries, anticipated programme expenditures, the costs of operations, logistics and procurement, and monitoring and evaluation. The budget will reflect the transition period culminating in the establishment of the National School Feeding Programme.

3 School Feeding Programming

This section presents programme design issues such as minimum requirements for participation, targeting, complementary activities requiring inter-ministerial collaboration, school feeding modalities and monitoring and evaluation.

3.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and county superintendents and chief executive officers will collaborate to mobilize community leaders, parents and young people with a view to achieving at least the minimum standards to qualify for the programme.

The minimum requirements for schools to participate in the National School Feeding Programme are:

- a. a functioning and democratically elected PTA that is aware of the rules and procedures of the National School Feeding Programme;
- b. registration with the Ministry of Education and adherence to its guidelines on recording pupils' daily attendance in class; schools will keep regular records of school feeding activities and will make them available for inspection during monitoring visits; school administrations commit to the supervision of proper food preparation and handling;
- c. adherence to the School Feeding Code of Conduct and the Professional Code of Conduct;
- d. access to clean, secure and covered cooking areas and to storage facilities for programme food and non-food inputs;
- e. access to safe water in or near school premises;

- f. access to separate latrines for girls, boys and staff;
- g. community commitment to support the National School Feeding Programme by providing environmentally friendly equipment such as fuel-friendly stoves, cooking utensils and non-food inputs; and
- h. access for food deliveries and monitoring.

All activities related to the National School Feeding Programme are protected against the use of child labour.

This policy will not eliminate schools that do not immediately meet the above minimum requirements. Such schools will receive any necessary support from county superintendents and district commissioners, PTAs and communities with a view to developing capacities and infrastructure to meet the requirements within 12 months. County school boards will facilitate support for infrastructure development by partners in the education sector.

3.2 ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

The National School Feeding Policy applies to all children of school age. The transition to national coverage will be gradual, reflecting the growing economic and financial capabilities for implementation in Liberia's government and administrative structures.

The policy on the grades eligible for school feeding will be as follows:

- a. All regular students enrolled for basic education in grades 1–9 in public schools qualify for school feeding, irrespective of age and gender.
- b. All pre-primary, primary and junior secondary public and community self-help schools registered with the Government of Liberia are eligible for school feeding.
- c. All early-childhood students in nursery and kindergarten classes in public

primary or community-based schools are eligible for school feeding.⁴

- d. All students in non-formal ALPs are eligible for school feeding.
- e. County school boards and the Ministry of Education will decide the selection of grades and school levels for participation in the National School Feeding Programme.
- f. The Ministry of Education will consider assisting private schools on a case-by-case basis, taking into account student population, needs and education indicators, as stipulated in section 3.2.1.b.
- g. Secondary school students will benefit from school feeding provided that their school has a combination of basic education and secondary education students.

Development partners seeking to participate in the National School Feeding Programme must contact the Department of School Feeding at the Ministry of Education to discuss the criteria for admission. The Department of School Feeding will consider development partners' qualifications for participation, bearing in mind the current needs of the National School Feeding Programme.

3.3 TARGETING

The school feeding policy applies to all of Liberia's 15 counties, with gradual expansion in line with the ability of schools to meet the minimum requirements listed in section 3.1.

As stated in section 3.2, this policy applies to all children of school age; the transition to national coverage will be gradual, reflecting the growing economic and financial

⁴ School feeding in early-childhood programmes for children aged of 3 to 5 is regarded as a preventative programme. According to WFP's school feeding policy, targeting this age group bridged the gap between infancy and primary school age.

capabilities for implementation in Liberia's government and administrative structures. During the transitional phase, high-quality school feeding programmes will target the selected beneficiaries, use the most appropriate modalities of food delivery and provide a quality food basket. Local social and economic contexts must be fully understood, and communities and vulnerable groups must participate in the identification, prioritization and planning of activities.

Targeting in the period before full national coverage will be needs-based and consistent with the targeting criteria below.

3.3.1 Selection of Counties and Districts

The policy on the selection of counties and districts is as follows:

- a. The Ministry of Education will eventually include all 15 counties in the National School Feeding Programme. Until national coverage is possible, the programme will be based on a gradual transition to the national programme.
- b. The following targeting criteria will be used by the Ministry of Education to decide whether a district qualifies for a school feeding programme during the transition period: low enrolment in primary and junior secondary education, low completion rates, high dropout rates and gender disparities in student enrolment.
- c. The Ministry of Education will make the final decision on selection of a district for school feeding until the programme achieves national coverage.

3.3.2 Selection of Schools

The policy on the selection of schools is as follows:

- a. Schools in urban and rural areas are eligible for participation in the National School Feeding Programme.
- b. Schools must fulfil the minimum requirements for participation as

stipulated in section 3.1 to be eligible for the National School Feeding Programme.

- c. County school boards will make the final decision on a school's inclusion in the National School Feeding Programme.

3.3.3 Targeting Take Home Rations

The policy on the distribution of THR is as follows:

- a. Girl pupils will receive THR in grades 4–9 only in schools benefiting from the National School Feeding Programme where the gender gap is 15 percent or more.
- b. Girls in levels 2 and 3 in ALP schools are entitled to THR provided the gender gap is more than 15 percent. The Ministry of Education may modify this provision with reference to components in the curriculum and student demographics.
- c. Students with disabilities, irrespective of gender, will be eligible for THR under guidelines to be developed by the Ministry of Education.

3.4 SCHOOL FEEDING MODALITIES

This policy outlines the provision of food for schoolchildren in the form of on-site meals or THR. In the latter case families are given food if their children attend school for a minimum number of days per month. In-school meals may be either full meals, snacks of high-energy biscuits, or fortified drinks.

The policy establishes the timing and composition of on-site school meals on the basis of factors such as the length of the school day, the nutritional status of children, local eating habits, the availability of food, ease of preparation, costs, the availability of trained cooks and cooking facilities, and access to clean water. The school day normally starts at 08:00 and ends at 13:30: school meals will be provided during the recess. If a school has more than one shift, the timing of school meals will be adjusted to meet the needs of later shifts so that school feeding achieves its educational

objectives and children are not hungry in school.

3.4.1 In-School Meals

The policy on in-school meals is as follows:

- a. The contents of in-school meals must be as diverse as possible and include cereals and protein-rich foods.
- b. The National School Feeding Programme will provide half-day school rations with a minimum energy equivalent of 600–900 kcal, constituting 30 percent to 45 percent of a child's daily calorie requirements.
- c. School meals will be served ideally as a mid-morning snack during the recess.
- d. School meals will be fortified as much as possible with minerals and vitamins to ensure that school feeding achieves its nutritional and educational objectives.

3.4.2 Take Home Rations

These are a form of conditional cash transfer or in-kind transfer. The THR are provided for families as an incentive to keep their children – especially girls – in school in areas where they would not normally attend school.

The policy on THR is as follows:

- a. THR will be distributed monthly to students selected for the ration scheme provided their school attendance during the month is at least 85 percent.
- b. The minimum recommended THR is 12.5 kg of cereals to provide up to 100 percent of energy requirements per student per month. This responds primarily to high levels of household food insecurity and sharing of food in households. Vegetable oil and other foods may be added to THR.

3.5 COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

This policy recognizes that school feeding is most effective when it is part of a comprehensive school health and nutrition package. School feeding is not a stand-alone

intervention: complementary activities by ministries and specialist development partners must be incorporated to achieve optimal benefits for children. Examples include the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, deworming, micronutrients and clean fuel: such interventions enhance the effectiveness of investments in child development and promote improved educational outcomes and social equity.

This policy emphasizes that these interventions must be implemented under the guidance and leadership of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and its partners in the health, water and sanitation sectors.

3.5.1 Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Ensuring access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene – and particularly the provision of clean latrines and education in sanitation awareness – is a critical complementary activity for the National School Feeding Programme. Food must be prepared in hygienic conditions to prevent the transmission of food-borne or water-borne diseases. The benefits of good food and nutrition will be eliminated if poor sanitation leads to infections or outbreaks of disease. Poor sanitary conditions often prevent children – especially girls – from attending school and contribute to child illnesses. Schoolchildren, administrators and cooks must have hand-washing facilities. As stated above, interventions in the health sector require the guidance and leadership of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and partners in the health sector.

3.5.2 Deworming

Infections in children caused by worms or intestinal parasites have serious detrimental effects on educational performance, attendance, morbidity, nutrition and cognitive development. Treatment should be provided for all children receiving school feeding in areas where infections are

endemic. The deworming component of the National School Feeding Programme is intended to reduce the prevalence and intensity of worm infestations in children, thereby enhancing learning and cognitive development among young children who often have a high prevalence of infection. Deworming is essential to maintain sound nutritional status and achieve better absorption of food.

The School Health Division of the Ministry of Education is responsible for the deworming of children aged 5 to 15; the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is responsible for children under 5. Deworming in schools is recommended once or twice a year depending on prevalence.

3.5.3 Micronutrients

School feeding programmes can provide macronutrients as well as essential micronutrients – vitamins and minerals – that enable students to learn and to develop physically and intellectually. Micronutrient deficiencies are a risk factor for health and learning: iron deficiency anaemia, for example, affects learning capacity and is associated with hookworm, malaria and infectious diseases. In view of this, the micronutrient intake of schoolchildren must be monitored.

3.5.4 Linkages with Local Agriculture

Under the current school feeding programme, food procurement is often devolved to non-governmental organizations and United Nations partners of the Ministry of Education. A major strategy for achieving the universal school attendance objective of the Education Sector Plan is to “provide school feeding as necessary, ensuring a phased reduction in imported items and costs”.⁵ The Government of Liberia will assume full responsibility for school feeding procurement, logistics and delivery in

⁵ Education Sector Plan, page 83.

several phases, using agreed transitional procedures and realistic timeframes.

The Ministry of Education and its partners will explore possibilities for enhanced linkages to local agricultural producers for the National School Feeding Programme: examples include supporting programmes such as WFP's Purchase for Progress, Home-Grown School Feeding and school gardens, as explained below.

Under the 2011 New Education Reform Act, agriculture is part of the school curriculum and will involve rural schools with sufficient land in direct participation.

3.5.5 School Gardens

School gardening is encouraged as a complement to school feeding. The objective is to support community learning about agricultural techniques and to provide teachers and pupils with experience of agriculture. School gardening was piloted in a joint programme of the ministries of education and agriculture and WFP: the lessons learned will be used in planning and cultivating future school gardens. Gardens managed by students, teachers and parents provide a variety of nutritious vegetables, fruits and small livestock; the simple production methods can be easily replicated at home.⁶ School gardens reduce the cost of food for school feeding and households.

⁶ There are lessons to be adopted from Brazil, Cuba and Rwanda. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reported in 2006 on a school nutrition and gardening programme in 30 schools in Bangladesh that educated 1,800 girls aged 13 to 15, who cultivated vegetables and fruits in gardens of 52 m². Seeds were provided to start each garden, and technical guidelines were supplied for crop management. The report stated: "At the end of one year, it was noted that over 75% of the students ate leafy vegetables at least every other day. The rest of the students (19% and 7%) ate vegetables more than 3 days/week and between 2-3 days/week, respectively. Fruit consumption was lower than that of vegetables, probably because fruits are less accessible. Eighty percent of the students reported that their household prepared the recipes learnt in the nutrition education sessions of the School Garden programme."

School gardens create good long-term dietary habits and place food choices in the hands of the consumer. The effects of this component of the curriculum also extend to pupils' families and eventually their own future families.⁷ The Division of Agriculture and Environmental Education in the Ministry of Education is mandated to establish, supervise and coordinate a school-garden programme and to liaise with other divisions of the ministry to promote school gardening. The division will advise the ministry on the formulation and implementation of the curriculum, and will foster agricultural activities in all schools.

3.5.6 A Corruption-Free Society

The National School Feeding Programme will uphold transparency, good governance and accountability at all levels and among all stakeholders. The Government of Liberia and the Ministry of Education will intervene to minimize irregularities and the misuse of resources. The philosophy of a transparent and corrupt-free society will be promoted in the implementation and management of the National School Feeding Programme, and will be upheld at all levels of governance, including schools and communities. The Ministry of Justice collaborates in the development of the National School Feeding Policy to apply punitive measures in cases of breach of the School Feeding Code of Conduct and the Professional Code of Conduct.

3.5.7 Firewood and Fuel-Efficient Stoves

School feeding programmes can have a negative impact on forest resources as a result of the extraction of firewood to prepare meals. Such forest degradation is inextricably linked to food insecurity, and inefficient stoves emit high levels of pollution. The Ministry of Education will continue to explore alternative fuel sources

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2005. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0218e/a0218e00.htm>

and regard environmental intervention in schools and communities as a long-term investment in food security.

3.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

3.6.1 Monitoring and Reporting

For guidance on monitoring and reporting, this policy refers to the Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (2011) of the Division of School Feeding in the Ministry of Education. Under the provisions in the 2011 New Education Reform Act for the decentralization of powers to CEOs working under county school boards, the Ministry of Education will establish a monitoring and evaluation structure with a view to obtaining accurate statistics on all activities related to school feeding. Monitoring of the National School Feeding Programme will be an integral part of this structure, which will use the School-Based Record System to collect daily and periodic data from each class in each school for submission to district, county and central authorities. The system will set out reporting lines and will inform decision-making.

3.6.2 Evaluation

The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of Education will be responsible for the coordination, design and implementation of periodic evaluations of the National School Feeding Programme. Development partners will provide technical assistance and capacity development for the unit in planning and implementing future evaluations. A participatory inter-agency evaluation of the National School Feeding Programme will be conducted every year.

4 Planning, Coordination and Implementation

This section sets out the policy provisions regarding the roles and responsibilities of institutional and community stakeholders of the National School Feeding Programme.

4.1 COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP

This policy recognizes that partnerships at the central, county and district levels are critical in delivering the National School Feeding Programme. The Ministry of Education will lead in the promotion of multi-sectoral programmes with links to health, nutrition and social-protection programmes that include sound operational partnerships and coordination mechanisms.

Under the leadership of the Department for Instruction and in coordination with the Department of Planning, the Ministry of Education will:

- a. organize and facilitate quarterly internal coordination meetings of the bureaux and divisions of the Ministry of Education involved in the National School Feeding Programme; and
- b. organize and facilitate quarterly external coordination meetings with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender and Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, and development partners involved in the National School Feeding Programme.

At the county level operational mechanisms will be established under the leadership of county superintendents and chief education officers to facilitate partnerships and coordination among government institutions and partner organizations.

Superintendents and chief education officers will:

- 1 ensure sound partnerships and coordination with health, nutrition and community partners involved in the National School Feeding Programme; and
- 2 organize and facilitate regular meetings between inter-sectoral partners and establish channels of communication at the county level.

4.2 ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education is responsible for implementation of the National School Feeding Programme. At the national level, the programme is led by the School Feeding Division under the Bureau of General Administration, which is accountable to the Department of Administration. School feeding is to be implemented in line with the mandates of all relevant departments, bureaux and divisions with a view to mobilizing support for the programme and to coordinate activities.

The Ministry of Education will have the following responsibilities:

- a. assume the lead role and responsibility for all aspects of the planning and implementation of the National School Feeding Programme;
- b. identify lessons learned from previous and current school feeding programmes and incorporate them into planning, operations and future policies;
- c. secure funds and allocate them to school feeding in annual budgets on an incremental basis that reflects Liberia's economic performance and growth;
- d. ensure that the National School Feeding Policy is implemented properly and that a single definition of school feeding is applied to ensure that stakeholders apply uniform standards in their programmes, including appropriate provisions for the

- calorie and nutrition requirements of a school feeding programme; and
- e. coordinate the work of partners in the education sector, including partners in school feeding; the Ministry of Education will ensure that partners' contributions are coordinated to prevent duplication and gaps.

4.3 ROLE OF DIVISIONS AND UNITS IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

4.3.1 Division of School Feeding

The Division of School Feeding will have the following responsibilities:

- a. oversee the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National School Feeding Programme;
- b. coordinate school feeding in all relevant units of the Ministry of Education and ensure inter-sectoral collaboration among ministries involved in the National School Feeding Programme;
- c. plan and implement periodic headcounts of students in schools supported by the National School Feeding Programme in order to verify enrolment data; and
- d. prepare periodic reports for submission to the Ministry of Education and partners.

4.3.2 Parent-Teacher Association Unit

The PTA unit will have the following responsibilities:

- a. ensure that PTAs provide the support required for implementation of the National School Feeding Programme; and
- b. ensure that PTAs can liaise between schools and communities.

4.3.3 Division of Education Management Information System

The Division of Educational Management will have the following responsibilities:

- a. periodically collect and analyse school data and statistics to monitor developments in the education sector

relevant to the National School Feeding Programme;

- b. support the School Feeding Division in the analysis of current education statistics; and
- c. provide statistics on the National School Feeding Programme for the Annual National School Census Report.

4.3.4 Division of School Facilities

The Division of School Facilities designs schools and supervises their construction. The division will coordinate with the Division of School Feeding to ensure that facilities such as store rooms, kitchens, latrines and other requirements for participation in the National School Feeding Programme (see section 3.1) are included in designs for primary schools.

4.3.5 Division of Agriculture and Environmental Education

The Division of Agriculture and Environmental Education will have the following responsibilities:

- a. establish, supervise and coordinate sustainable school-garden programmes, including schools supported through the National School Feeding Programme;
- b. formulate the National Agriculture and Environmental Science Curriculum, and foster agricultural activities in all schools;
- c. liaise with the divisions of home economics, school health, PTAs and school feeding to promote school gardening;
- d. assign staff at the county level to support school gardening; and
- e. facilitate support from the Ministry of Agriculture for schools and the communities in the form of tools and agricultural inputs for school gardening.

4.4 ROLES AT DECENTRALIZED LEVELS

The 2011 New Education Reform Act established an education development fund

for each county, to be administered by each county school board. Resource for the National School Feeding Programme will be delivered through this system. In line with the 2011 act, CEOs will manage the daily operations of the school system, including the feeding programme, as directed by the county school boards. District education officers will be responsible for implementation of the National School Feeding Programme, with support from ministries.

4.4.1 Role of County Education Offices

County education offices will manage programmes and resources for the Ministry of Education, including the National School Feeding Programme.⁸ They will have the following responsibilities:

- a. assign school feeding focal points to assist CEOs; the focal points will be the primary point of contact;
- b. assign district focal points for the National School Feeding Programme and ensure that they receive adequate training before assuming their responsibilities;
- c. maintain accurate and up-to-date educational statistics for planning, implementation and monitoring the National School Feeding Programme;
- d. provide partners with accurate and up-to-date educational statistics related to the National School Feeding Programme;

⁸ The 2011 New Education Reform Act states that CEOs have the following functions:

- responsibility for the operations of the school system in the county and responsibility for personnel and county education programmes;
- supervision of the implementation of education policies, regulations, decisions, programmes and development projects through district education officers, as directed by the Ministry of Education; and
- quarterly, annual and special reports to the Deputy Minister of Education for Instruction, with a summary of monthly and annual reports received from district education officers for the reporting period.

- e. ensure that the focal points regularly monitor implementation of the National School Feeding Programme and providing support for districts and schools as required;
- f. ensure that district education offices and school authorities adhere to the School Feeding Code of Conduct, and oversee the training of teachers at the school level;
- g. ensure that schools selected for the National School Feeding Programme fulfil the minimum requirements for participation (see section 3.5); and
- h. produce monthly progress reports for the Ministry of Education and partners.

4.4.2 Role of District Education Office

District education offices will have the following responsibilities:⁹

- a. conduct regular monitoring of the National School Feeding Programme at the school level;
- b. maintain accurate and up-to-date educational statistics for planning, implementation and monitoring of the National School Feeding Programme in the district;
- c. provide CEOs with accurate and up-to-date educational statistics related to the National School Feeding Programme;
- d. ensure that teachers are qualified to implement school feeding, and support them as necessary;
- e. ensure that district school feeding focal points regularly monitor implementation

⁹ The 2011 New Education Reform Act states that district education officer have the following responsibilities:

- supervising the implementation of all relevant national education policies, regulations, decisions, programmes and development projects in public and private schools, as directed by CEOs and county school boards; and
- making quarterly, annual and special reports to CEOs and county school boards, with summaries of operational reports from public schools in the district; annual reports from district education officers are to be submitted to CEOs for inclusion in his annual report.

of the National School Feeding Programme and support schools as required;

- f. ensure that school authorities adhere to the School Feeding Code of Conduct; and
- g. produce monthly progress reports on the National School Feeding Programme for CEOs.

4.4.3 Role of School Principals

School principals are directly responsible for receiving and securing food for the National School Feeding Programme and for overall management of the programme; this includes keeping regular attendance records.¹⁰ The specific responsibilities of school principals in relation to the National School Feeding Programme include:

- a. maintaining up-to-date records of storeroom transactions and regular updates of food utilization and stock balances;
- b. ensuring distribution of food to the beneficiaries;
- c. submitting monthly feeding reports to district education offices and partners;
- d. ensuring that pupils receive a balanced meal on each school day; and
- e. maintaining daily attendance records for each class and regularly updated school statistics for the purposes of the National School Feeding Programme for submission to district education offices.

4.4.4 Role of Communities and Parent-Teacher Associations

Community involvement is essential in the planning, implementation and monitoring of school feeding: community members, PTAs, traditional leaders and community councils should always be included in consultations.

¹⁰ The 2011 New Education Reform Act states that public, private and faith-based schools must keep records of admissions, drop-outs, graduations, attendance, tuition, fees, educational achievement and conduct. Records that are not confidential will be open for inspection on request.

The PTAs are important to the National School Feeding Programme: they help to increasing awareness of the programme in communities and ensuring that the codes of conduct are respected. The PTAs work with school administrations to ensure that the programme is correctly implemented and reinforce collaboration between schools and community residents. Parents' contributions to school feeding may include the provision of fuel, water and storage and cooking areas; parents may also help with the cooking and distribution of food, or contribute to cooks' allowances.

The policy provisions regarding PTAs are as follows:

- a. assist school administrations in providing clean and secure storage and kitchen facilities;
- b. mobilize support for school gardens and for the maintenance of such projects during school vacations;
- c. monitor the quantity and quality of the food distributed;
- d. mobilize parents and communities to ensure the availability of fuel, wood and other inputs as required; and
- e. ensure that all eligible children go to school at the right age.

4.5 ROLES OF MINISTRIES

The Ministry of Education will lead the National School Feeding Programme. Other ministries will collaborate with the Ministry of Education to ensure harmonization of the provisions of this policy. The ministries involved are the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Public Works. Other ministries may be involved as necessary.

4.5.1 Ministry of Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture will have the following responsibilities:

- a. provide technical assistance on school gardens for the Division of Agriculture

and Environmental Education in the Ministry of Education with a view to maximizing the national student population's understanding and knowledge of agriculture through curriculum components and school activities;

- b. assist communities involved in the Purchase for Progress project by providing agricultural inputs and tools to enable them to develop their capacity to produce food for the National School Feeding Programme; and
- c. assist the Division of Agriculture and Environmental Education in training teachers in school gardening.

4.5.2 Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will be the main liaison group for complementary activities involving children's health, water, sanitation, hygiene, deworming and the provision of micronutrients (see section 3). The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will have the following responsibilities:

- a. ensure that all schools supported by the National School Feeding Programme have access to safe water for drinking, food preparation and hand washing, and access to separate latrines for girls, boys and staff;
- b. support Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All, health and nutrition education in schools; and
- c. assist the Ministry of Education with deworming in schools.

4.5.3 Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Ministry of Internal Affairs will have the following responsibilities:

- a. coordinate county and district education offices to ensure that decentralized levels are supported by ministries as necessary to implement the National School Feeding Programme; and
- b. ensure accountability at the local level and encourage local authorities to

assume ownership of the National School Feeding Programme.

4.5.4 Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice will be responsible for enforcing the School Feeding Code of Conduct and the Professional Code of Conduct as it relates to the National School Feeding Programme, and for applying sanctions in cases of non-compliance.

4.5.5 Ministry of Gender and Development

The Ministry of Gender and Development will work with the Ministry of Education in promoting gender equality in line with the gender objectives of the National School Feeding Programme.

4.5.6 Ministry of Public Works

The Ministry of Public Works will be responsible for planning and constructing roads to ensure access to schools supported by the National School Feeding Programme.

4.6 ROLE OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

The Ministry of Education will coordinate national and international partners involved in school feeding. Agreements with these partners will ensure the standardization of programme design and food procurement modalities in relation to the National School Feeding Programme.

The policy with regard to the roles of partners will be as follows:

- a. Capacity development and related resources will be coordinated to enable the development of the National School Feeding Programme.
- b. Non-governmental partners seeking to implement a programme with a school feeding component must coordinate with Ministry of Education and with other ministries depending on the programme concerned. Any such arrangement must be agreed with the Ministry of Education in line with this policy. Such partners must be accredited by the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and certified by the Ministry of Education through the Department of Planning, Research and Development.

- c. Non-governmental partners seeking involvement in the programme will be selected by the Ministry of Education on the basis of past performance, expertise and willingness to contribute their own funds and to take and share risks. Such partners must comply with government policy regarding the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, protection of beneficiaries and codes of conduct relating to the National School Feeding Programme and international norms.

This policy anticipates changes in modes of work and, in particular, a change in WFP's partnership with the Ministry of Education whereby WFP will henceforth assist the Government of Liberia in implementing and managing the National School Feeding Programme. WFP has extensive experience in school feeding and logistics, and it will continue to work with development partners in providing capacity development assistance for the Ministry of Education as required.

ANNEX A. BENEFITS OF THE POLICY

The policy highlights the following benefits, supported by evidence from academic research:

- a. **Alleviation of short-term hunger to improve learning capacity.** Breakfast or mid-morning snacks provided during the school day improve children's performance in cognitive tasks. Children who are hungry in class are more likely to find difficulty in concentrating and performing complex tasks, even if they are otherwise well nourished.
- b. **Increased enrolment, attendance, retention and completion rates.** School feeding will encourage families to enrol their children and will increase retention rates in schools.
- c. **Reduction of gender and social inequalities.** School feeding contributes to social equity and addresses gender and social inequalities in education, involving communities, parents and teachers. This policy seeks to reduce household expenditures on food and thus provide incentives to families to send daughters, orphans and other vulnerable children to school. When girls are educated they are more likely to have fewer and healthier children.
- d. **Improved nutrition and health.** Enhancing the nutrition and health status of primary schoolchildren leads to better learning and decreased morbidity, paving the way for a healthier life.
- e. **Value transfer.** School feeding acts as a safety net by providing a significant value transfer to households that have children enrolled in school. It constitutes a resource transfer to households of the value of the food distributed, and increases household food availability. The value transfer may help poor households to make available resources and to avert negative coping strategies such as taking children out of school for agricultural and other economic purposes. This policy seeks to protect children from the risk of child labour or forced labour and other harmful activities.
- f. **Increased income for small-scale farmers.** The eventual local purchases of food for school feeding will promote sustainable development by supporting reliable markets for small-scale farmers and producers and will help them to access markets.
- g. **Increased development opportunities.** School feeding facilitates community participation in other school interventions that support long-term needs and are based on small-scale activities such as school gardens. School gardening is an important complement to school feeding programmes in terms of learning opportunities in agriculture (see section 3).
- h. **Safe and secure learning environments.** School feeding can restore a sense of normality among children in insecure environments. School feeding helps children to socialize in a secure setting and develops cohesion in communities.

ANNEX B. OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The following objectives and indicators will be used to measure progress in the National School Feeding Programme.

Educational objectives	Indicators of success	Outcomes
Enrolment	Average annual rate of change in numbers of boys/girls enrolled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved learning - Increased household human and financial capital - Increased lifetime earnings of targeted children - Increased access to education for girls - Decreased HIV/AIDS prevalence - Inter-generational effects – positive influence of more educated parents - Children's growth enhanced
Attendance	Attendance rate	
Retention/dropout	Retention and drop-out rates	
School achievements	Promotion rate	
Short-term hunger alleviated, leading to improved child cognition	Learning achievement	
Completion of primary education	Pass rate	
Gender equality in education	Gender ratio of girls to boys enrolled	
Health	Services of complementary activities in place – safe water, fuel-efficient stoves, hygiene (see section 3)	
School gardens	Proportion of schools with agricultural curriculum and teachers trained Proportion of schools with assets in place	
Local procurement	Food for school feeding purchased locally as % of food distributed for school feeding nationally	
Capacity Development	Action plans and milestones	

ANNEX C: REFERENCES

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ANNEX D. EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL MEALS IN LIBERIA, JULY 2011

Organization	Type	Composition (g)				Kcal
		Cereals	Pulses	Oil	Salt	
WFP	In-school hot meal	150	30	20	4	900
International Relief and Development	In-school hot meal	150	30	20		900
International Relief and Development	Snack	75 g of protein-enriched bakery products and 250 ml beverage				850
Scottish Relief International/Mary's Meals	In-school hot meal					

The Current School Feeding Programme in Liberia

Since school feeding started in 1968, with only a few schools, the programme has grown to reach 380,000 pupils in 1,500 schools – 44 percent of all schools and 52 percent of pupils in basic education. WFP, International Relief and Development and Scottish Relief International are supporting the programme, as indicated in the table below.

Organization	Target area			Students		
	Counties	Districts	Schools	Boys	Girls	Total
WFP	12	88	1 401	157 574	152 088	309 662
International Relief and Development	2	7	86	25 251	24 856	50 107
Scottish Relief International/Mary's Meals	3	7	148	10 016	14 099	24 115
All 15 counties covered	15	102	1,635	192 841	191 043	383 884

In addition to on-site school feeding, THR are provided for 9,000 girls in schools where the gender gap is 15 percent or higher. The THR are distributed to girls in grades 4–6 who attend at least 85 percent of school days per month. The monthly ration comprises 25 kg of bulgur wheat and 2 litres of vegetable oil or 5 kg of pulses. The THR are distributed after the final calculation of pupils' monthly attendance records.

ACRONYMS

ALP	accelerated learning programme
CEO	county education officer
CFSNS	comprehensive food security and nutrition survey
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
PTA	parent-teacher association
THR	take-home ration
WFP	World Food Programme

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