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USDA's School Feeding Program in Ethiopia is Making a Difference

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Approved By:

Michael G. Francom

Prepared By:

FAS Post and Washington Staff

Report Highlights:

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working in partnership with the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to provide school feeding assistance to more than 260,000 students in the Afar and Somali regions in Ethiopia. This multi-year project, known as the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, is helping reduce hunger and boost student literacy through increased school enrollment. Meantime, in response to the drought, the Government of Ethiopia is working to provide school feeding assistance to the millions of drought-affected students, but more outside support is needed.

Overview of USDA's School Feeding Program in Ethiopia

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), through its McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, is helping to feed 263,000 students at 590 primary schools in both the Afar and Somali regions, two of the most food deficit areas in the country. USDA, which is currently the only international donor providing school feeding assistance in these locations, supports nearly 20 percent of primary school student population in these regions.¹ In addition to helping reduce hunger, the program has helped boost enrollment and improve literacy.

The school feeding ration is generally served midmorning and consists of corn-soy blend (CSB), a nutritious, fortified porridge, as well as a monthly take-home ration of vegetable oil for female students. For the 15/16 school year, 4,900 metric tons of CSB and 1,020 metric tons of vegetable oil will be used to feed students at the target schools. In addition to the feeding component, the USDA-supported school meals program includes capacity building activities that are aimed at supporting increased literacy among school-age children. For example, this project seeks to improve the quality of instruction through the distribution of educational materials and the training of teachers and school administrators. Additionally, this project seeks to improve the physical learning environment by building and rehabilitating school infrastructure and increasing access to clean water and sanitation services through the construction of water harvesting grounds.

The current multi-year program, which is funded at \$28.7 million, is in its last year (13/14-15/16) and is being implemented with the support of WFP. Last July, USDA [announced](#) the release of its annual solicitation for the next cycle of the McGovern-Dole program and Ethiopia was listed among the priority countries.

McGovern-Dole Program Achievements

According to WFP figures, the program in just four years (10/11-13/14) contributed to higher enrollment rates in both regions. For example, student enrollment in Somali region climbed from 64 to nearly 100 percent over this period. In the case of the Afar region, enrollment climbed from 35 to 60 percent. In addition, target schools during this timeframe demonstrated a high, stable attendance rate of 97 percent. (Note: The drought has likely depressed some of these numbers.)

One of the key characteristics of the McGovern-Dole program is improving female attendance and literacy. As one incentive to promote female enrollment, this project provides girls who achieve a monthly attendance rate of at least 80 percent with a take-home ration of one liter of vegetable oil each month. This incentive has contributed to a more balanced gender ratio of 0.95:1 in 2014 compared to .087:1 in non-targeted schools.

Impact of the Drought on School Feeding

¹ According to the [Ministry of Education's Statistical Report for 2013/14](#), there were 210,130 primary school students in Afar and 1,137,280 in Somali. Country wide there were 18.1 million primary school students during this same time period.

Humanitarian relief partners have reported dropouts in drought-affected areas reaching into the millions. According to the [2016 Humanitarian Requirements Document](#) (HRD), there are 2.1 million primary school students that have been affected by drought, flood, and conflict. Of these, a little more than half, or 1.2 million students from about 3,800 schools in drought-affected areas, are in need of school feeding assistance at a cost of \$8.7 million. (See table below.) School meals, according to the HRD, “should incentivize families in need to send their children to school, while improving the overall nutritional situation.”

In response to this critical need, the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) is scaling up its [school feeding efforts](#) with the support of Save the Children and WFP. The GOE has also requested additional support from the international community. Meanwhile, USDA’s school meals program is playing a limited, but important role in helping mitigate the number of dropouts in many of the [hot spot priority woredas](#) ([December 2015](#)) in Afar and Somali regions where target schools are located. (See tables 1 and 2 below for school locations.) Further, based on experience from past droughts, the gross enrollment at USDA-supported schools is likely to increase as families look for alternative ways to feed their school-aged children.

Critical Priority: School Meals for 1,287,444 Children Learning in 3,779 Schools		
Activity	Beneficiaries	Requirements US\$
Provide meals	1.2M	8.7M
TOT for School feeding programme management training	3779	0.2M
Utensils for 3779 schools (cookerries)	-	2.7M
Transportation	3779	2.2M

Source: HRD 2016; officially launched in December 2015.



Photo: Preparation of school feeding ration.



Photo: Students eating ration.

Table 1: Target Schools in the Afar Region			
Woreda	Number of Schools	Woreda	Number of Schools
Abealla	18	Elidar	21
Adaar	2	Erebt	7
Afambo	5	Ewa	9
Afdera	3	Fentale	12
Amibarra	22	Gewane	13
Argoba	15	Gulena	12
Awra	11	Hadele aila	3
Aysaita	14	Kori	2
Berahelle	19	Kunebu	17
Bidu	2	Megale	8
Burre Mudaytu	7	Mile	9
Chifra	27	Semurobi	4
Dalifagie	17	Tellalak	14
Dallol	17	Teru	2
Dewe	10	Yallo	10
Dubti	11	Total	361
Dulecha	18		

Table 2: Target Schools in the Somali Region			
Woreda	Number of Schools	Woreda	Number of Schools
Adadle	2	Gode	6
Afdem	4	Gorabakasa	2
Aware	6	Gunagado	3
Awbare	12	Guradamole	3
Aysha	6	Gursum	2
Babile	2	Hamaro	2
Barey	3	Hargele	4
Bokh	6	Harshin	8
Charati	6	Hudet	3
Dambel	10	Jijiga	16
Danan	2	Kabridahar	5
Danod	5	Kebribayah	7
Degahbur	6	Kelafo	4
Degahmadow	4	Lagahida	1
Doboweyn	5	Mayamuk	1
Dolado	5	Meiso	4
Dolobaye	4	Moyale	3
Duhun	3	Mustahil	2
E-Emey	2	Salahad	1
Elkari	2	Segag	3
Erer	9	Sheygosh	4
Ferfer	2	Shilabo	4
Fik	2	Shinnile	7
Filtu	6	Warder	6
Garbo	2	W-emey	2
Gashamo	4	Total	229
Geladi	6		