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**WFP EVALUATION**

# **End-Term Evaluation of WFP School-Feeding USDA McGovern Dole Grant 2017-2020**

Decentralized Evaluation Report



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# Key personnel for the evaluation

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

1. The end-term evaluation (ETE) of the School Feeding Programme (SFP), being implemented during the period January 2018-June 2021 in Cox's Bazar district, supported by McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Grant through the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been commissioned by WFP Country Office, Bangladesh (WFP-CO). The evaluation considers the evaluation questions specifically for the end-term of FY17 award and was conducted during the period June 2020–March 2021, wherein the data collection was done during the period, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
2. The USDA McGovern-Dole FY-17 project was expected to benefit 47,689 schoolchildren of Grades I-V in 146 schools by providing approximately 9.3 million micro-nutrient fortified biscuits per year and supporting complimentary education interventions in two upazilas (Ukhiya and Kutubdia) of Cox's Bazar. The project was also expected to aid the formulation and operationalization of the first National School Meal Policy (NSMP) and help mainstream Government of Bangladesh's National School Feeding in Poverty Prone Areas Programme (NSFPPA) into the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP IV).
3. The ETE serves several critical purposes intended for accountability and learning. The aim of the evaluation is to assess the achievement on project results, explore the strength of the exit strategy with a focus on achieving program sustainability and compare the end-term values with the baseline and mid-term values, through the lens of relevance, efficiency, impact, effectiveness and sustainability. For the end-term evaluation, while equal weightages on each of the OECD-DAC criteria have been given, the focus has been on impact and sustainability. The evaluation also strives to underline the key lessons learnt that can inform strategic and operational decisions for future programmes.
4. The evaluation attempts to highlight beneficiaries' perspective and experiences (excluding students) with regards to the programme activities and results yielded. Additionally, gender equity and inclusion has been mainstreamed throughout the evaluation and the unintended impact of the programme on gender dimensions have also been assessed. Wherever appropriate<sup>1</sup>, gender dimensions have been factored into the sub-questions/key information areas for each evaluation question.
5. In accordance with the circular of GoB, which restricts the access to teacher's attendance to district and upazila officers, evaluation of indicators that required teachers' attendance has been excluded from the scope of the evaluation. Furthermore, given the context on a global pandemic and its associated restrictions on travel, students were excluded as a respondent category for the end-term evaluation so as to prevent risk of exposure and ensure adherence to safety protocols. For the indicators for which primary data collection could not be done, values from the monitoring reports and the MTE have been used for the purpose of reporting.

## Methodology

6. The end-term evaluation adopted a mixed-method approach for primary data collection. The difference in status of indicators from baseline to end-term was examined through a comparison group vis-a-vis intervention schools supported by the FY-17 project.
7. Factoring the situation caused due to COVID-19, the data collection was scheduled in December 2020. The entire data collection process was carried out by ensuring that all safety guidelines were followed so that no respondents were subjected to risk for exposure to COVID-19. To ensure the safety of all the stakeholders involved, DMA (NRMC's local partner in Bangladesh) carried out the data collection under the virtual guidance of the core evaluation team in New Delhi.
8. Following the simple random sampling approach adopted during baseline and mid-term, 50 Government Public Schools (GPS) were identified as sample (30 intervention and 20 comparison). The schools were selected randomly in the same proportion as the number of programme schools in the districts. The sample size was calculated at the programme level using the 'differences method' formula with

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<sup>1</sup> SFP by design does not have a specific focus on gender related issues and therefore the evaluation highlights gender dimensions wherever appropriate.

a finite population<sup>2</sup>. One parent of a student from each grade was selected per school (total 250 parents from 50 schools). From each school, one head teacher, one teacher, and one storekeeper were also interviewed. Overall 20 FGDs were conducted, 10 for each category i.e. mothers and SMC members.

9. Considering that the Difference-in-Difference analysis was not possible during the baseline, an activity evaluation was conducted wherein comparative monitoring data from the comparison schools was collected. Accordingly, for school feeding indicators, a direct comparison between the intervention and comparison schools has been carried out.

### Limitation

10. The implementation of the programme activities commenced from October 2018. Due to closure of schools since February 2020 and postponement of activities and re-alignment of implementation strategy due to COVID-19 prior to the commencement of data collection (December 2020) for ETE, the evaluation may not highlight or report significant change in the impact of the programme's activities.

11. Given that students were not sampled for the end-term evaluation, data on significant indicators had to be captured through parents. Questions on oral fluency and comprehension could not be asked as the EGRA tool was not administered. The reporting on indicators for literacy outcomes therefore, has been done based on the data captured during the MTE and supplemented through the findings of the qualitative discussions.

### Key Findings

#### Relevance

12. Findings suggest that the programme is well aligned with the national government's priorities, policies and strategies. **The programme is aligned with the priorities of the NEP (2010), PEDP4, NPAN-2 as well as the NSSS (2015).**

13. Given the persisting challenge of quality of education in Bangladesh (especially in Cox's Bazar), the programme's strategy that included providing trainings to teachers and headmasters on new teaching techniques and effective school management and establishing reading corners to improve Bangla reading comprehension, was relevant and responsive to the challenges. The biscuit distribution intervention finds its relevance given its role in improving attentiveness, attendance and enrolment of students. Community participation events such as "Read-play festival" and "Grade I reception day" celebrated as part of SFP also contribute to the relevance of the programme since they aim to address challenges related to awareness around attendance, enrolment and literacy and provide platforms to encourage understanding of and demand for quality of education.

14. The pandemic gave rise to new challenges, especially with regard to food insecurity and poor food consumption. **In this context, SFP's implementation strategy including i) distribution of fortified biscuits, ii) awareness generation on cooking and consumption of nutritious food and iii) promotion of vegetable gardens contributes to the relevance of the programme as it aims to address challenges of hunger, food insecurity and poor food consumption.**

15. In the challenging context of the pandemic, WFP's adaptation of its implementation strategy to emphasise on promoting health and hygiene practices, capacity building of teachers and SMC members, include more home visits, door-to-door distribution of biscuits and use of digital platforms to enable last mile delivery was **responsive to the changing context and evolving needs of the community**. SFP's efforts to ensure continuation of students' education at home through home visits and utilisation of online platforms such as Facebook and TV channels, made the interventions responsive and highly relevant. **However, despite such efforts, a large proportion of students remain unreached owing to a lack of access to devices and internet for online classes and communication.**

16. SFP was also found to be complementing initiatives made by other donors and the government, through its provision of fortified biscuits to students and complimentary education interventions, further proving its relevance. **Therefore, the evaluation team found that the implementation strategy adopted by the programme, adequately targets the right people with the right type of assistance and was therefore, found to be relevant.**

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Confidence interval of 1.96 and estimated difference set at 5%, as per Cochran (1977), Cochran, W. G. (1977) Sampling Techniques. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, John Wiley & Sons, New York

## Effectiveness

17. The evaluation findings indicate that the existence of classroom libraries for each grade and the building the capacity of book captains has led to developing and encouraging reading habits, resulting in an improvement in the reading and comprehension skills of students, as reported by parents and teachers. In addition to establishing classroom libraries, interventions such as Read Play Festival and Supplementary Reading Material (SRM) period have also been found to be effective in promoting reading and comprehension abilities. These efforts have also been instrumental in making students and parents aspire towards greater educational outcomes. Further, with regard to improving attentiveness of students, discussions with teachers revealed that biscuit distribution has been a key enabler to ensure the same as it reduced distractions caused by hunger.

18. Discussions with parents in intervention schools suggests that there is an increased understanding and acknowledgement of the value of quality education. Given the importance placed on education by parents, especially for girls, and the reported improvement in students' attentiveness and reading and comprehension abilities, the SFP has been effective in promoting literacy outcomes.

19. With regard to the capacity building of teachers and headmasters, trainings for new teaching learning techniques were postponed due to closure of schools since March 2020 (as a result of the pandemic). Thus, the progress made on the indicators with regard to trainings fell short of their targets. However, an increase in demonstration of learnings from these trainings have been self-reported by teachers, head teachers and storekeepers.

20. A comparison of the end-term findings with the baseline figures indicated a 37 percent increase in average enrolment per sample school (in intervention schools) and a decrease of 2.5 percent in comparison schools. Discussions in Ramu revealed that parents and teachers felt that the provision of free school bags and dry food/biscuits would considerably help improve enrolment, indicating towards the effectiveness of the SFP activities towards improving the enrolment and attendance of students in the intervention schools. **The project has not only achieved its targets of promoting regular attendance but also exceeded it in case of both boys and girls.**

21. WFP's efforts to promote improved nutrition and health included establishing vegetable gardens, training Little Agriculturalists and sensitizing teachers through various capacity building activities. The end-term findings indicate that 67 percent of the schools in Ukhiya and 58 percent in Kutubdia have vegetable gardens. However, no new vegetable gardens were established<sup>3</sup> during the period April 2020 to September 2020, as schools were closed and some of the training of Little Agriculturalists and teachers were postponed due to the same reason. **Despite the operational challenges, the trainings on nutrition, health and hygiene previously conducted with teachers as well as parents and the increased emphasis on messages related to health and hygiene during the pandemic helped improve health and nutrition practices.** The status of demonstration of child health and nutrition practices by parents were assessed using two parameters: handwashing at critical times<sup>4</sup> and dietary diversity.

22. The dietary diversity score for students for end-term was calculated based on responses from parents. The mean DDS during the end-term evaluation witnessed a decrease from the mid-term in both sample intervention (4.96 to 4.85) and comparison (5.49 to 5.04) schools. This decrease may be attributed to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic wherein affordability and availability of diverse nutrition-rich food has been a major challenge. However, it is interesting to note that the reduction in the mean dietary diversity

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