

Food for Education Improves Girls' Education:

The Pakistan Girls' Education Programme



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Context

In the last decade, access to primary education has improved significantly in many parts of the world (World Bank, 2006). Yet, 77 million children of primary school-age, are not in school and 57 percent of them are girls. Despite overall advances in primary enrolment, significant gender disparities remain particularly in certain regions, notably the Arab States, South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Beyond the primary level, the gender inequalities in education are even more significant. In secondary education, only one-third of countries have reached gender parity and women account for 64 percent of the world's illiterate adults – a figure, which has not progressed during the last decade (UNESCO, 2007).

Girls' education is affected by a variety of factors relating both to the demand and supply side of schooling: gender-stereotyped curricula and teaching practices, school infrastructure not adapted to the needs of girls (lack of separate toilets, school fencing, girls boarding facilities, etc.) risks for girls' safety on the way to and at school (girls being abducted, at risk of rape at school) or negative socio-cultural practices (early marriage, low value given to education of girls).

One of the most significant obstacles to girls' education is the direct and opportunity cost of schooling, which affects girls disproportionately. Girls from poor households register very low levels of school completion in many countries (Bruns, Mingat, and Rakotomalala 2003). In India, for example, a study found that, amongst poor girls, less than 10 percent had completed elementary education (grade 8), compared to 85 percent of rich boys (15-19 years age group). Educational attainment of girls was consistently lower than for boys across all income groups (Filmer 1999). Research from Guinea concluded that "Family income or wealth is a key variable that explains differences in educational opportunities and attainment between families. ... Poverty in a family will have a more detrimental effect upon the decision to enrol a girl in school than boys (Tembon and Al-Samarrai 1997). This is linked to the fact that girls spend a significant amount of their time on work, particularly domestic chores and agricultural labour. Their 'child work benefit' for parents, and thus the opportunity costs of their schooling, are thus greater than for boys. A survey in northern India found that girls' responsibility for domestic labour and for sibling care was by far the most important reason for not sending them to school or for their dropping out (The PROBE team 1999). A study from Bangladesh came to the following conclusion: "Normally, a rural Bangladeshi woman works 10-14 hours a day, though most of this work is not visible or reflected in national statistics. ... The need to perform domestic chores to help their mothers impedes girls' participation in formal education, forcing them into irregular attendance and/or to leave school" (UNESCO 1998). In addition, there is evidence that direct educational costs are higher for girls than for boys, for example because girls need safe transport to school or better school clothing to "look decent" (Herz and Sperling 2004). Where women and girls have low societal status, poor parents are often more reluctant to invest their meagre resources into the education of girls rather than that of their sons.

Food for Education (FFE) programmes - school feeding (school meals or snacks) and, particularly, the provision of take-home food rations (THRs) - have proven to be an effective means of addressing these obstacles, enrolling more girls in school, keeping them enrolled, and enhancing their adulthood wellbeing and productivity as a result. In this paper we review the rationale behind FFE, particularly of THRs in supporting access to education for girls and summarise the findings on the effectiveness of THR programmes available in the published literature. We then complement the evidence with a case study on a FFE programme in Pakistan designed to support girls' education. Cost-effectiveness is central to policy-making on achieving gender equality in education; to date, however, there are very few studies that assess the costs and cost-effectiveness of FFE programmes. The Pakistan case study attempts to fill this gap by analysing the costs and benefits of the girls' education programme.

Programme Description

FFE programmes are widespread in developing and higher income countries. In 2005 the UN World Food Programme supported FFE programmes in 74 countries, benefiting almost 22 million students of whom 48 percent girls. Some 3 million girls received dry, take-home food rations in support of their education. Take-home food rations typically consist of food commodities that are of high value to families and part of their standard food basket, such as cereals or vegetable oil. They are distributed monthly or quarterly; sometimes, the distribution time is also targeted to the agricultural lean season, when family food supplies are lowest and little food available on the local markets. Receipt of the food ration is conditional upon the student's regular attendance; in the case of WFP-supported FFE programmes, for example, a minimum of 80 percent monthly attendance rate is required. This helps to ensure that students don't just enrol but actually attend school regularly.

FFE interventions are generally designed to improve school participation amongst poor, vulnerable, food insecure populations and target areas where access to school and school completion are weak, particularly for girls. The risk of not accessing and/or completing primary school, a form of "educational vulnerability" anchored within a context of poverty and food insecurity, may be used to describe the common characteristic shared by the children targeted by FFE. This idea reflects the reality that household choices regarding education are often a result of complex decision processes, where poverty and hunger play an important role in determining the schooling outcomes (Drèze and Kingdon, 2001). As we have seen above, these factors are particularly significant in the case of girls' education.. In a general model of FFE (WFP, 2007), the initial outcome that drives increased school participation is the incentive to the household to send children to school. Generally, the incentive is achieved by way of an income transfer to the family of the student and also through an enhancement of the services provided at school (Bergeron & Del Rosso, 2001). FFE also has an incentive effect on pupils actually wanting to go to school to receive some food, rather than staying at home and missing out. Both of these effects will contribute to shift, in the short-term, a households' decision towards increased schooling. The effects are most significant amongst poorest populations and where education, including girls' education, is not well established. Figure 1 summarises the main impact theory for THRs and traces the causal links between inputs and the desired educational outcome of increased access, promotion and completion for primary school children, particularly girls.

Food for Education (FFE) programmes providing take-home rations are more suitable to target individual students such as girls and less complex to implement than conventional school meal programmes that require substantial investments both in terms of infrastructure and community inputs. For instance, THRs in the form of 4 litre vegetable oil cans are fairly easy to store and distribute, and THR distributions take place only once per month or less. More important, however, take-home food rations provide a more direct, higher value income transfer to families than school meals, which in turn provide the incentive for increased school participation. From this perspective, THRs provide an immediate, income based benefit, and another long-term benefit stemming from the returns to increased education, serving as both protective and promotive social protection (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). On the other hand, THR are not suitable to address nutritional and health issues affecting school children and their education, particularly cognitive capacity, which is a well established outcome of school meals (Kristjansson et al., 2007).

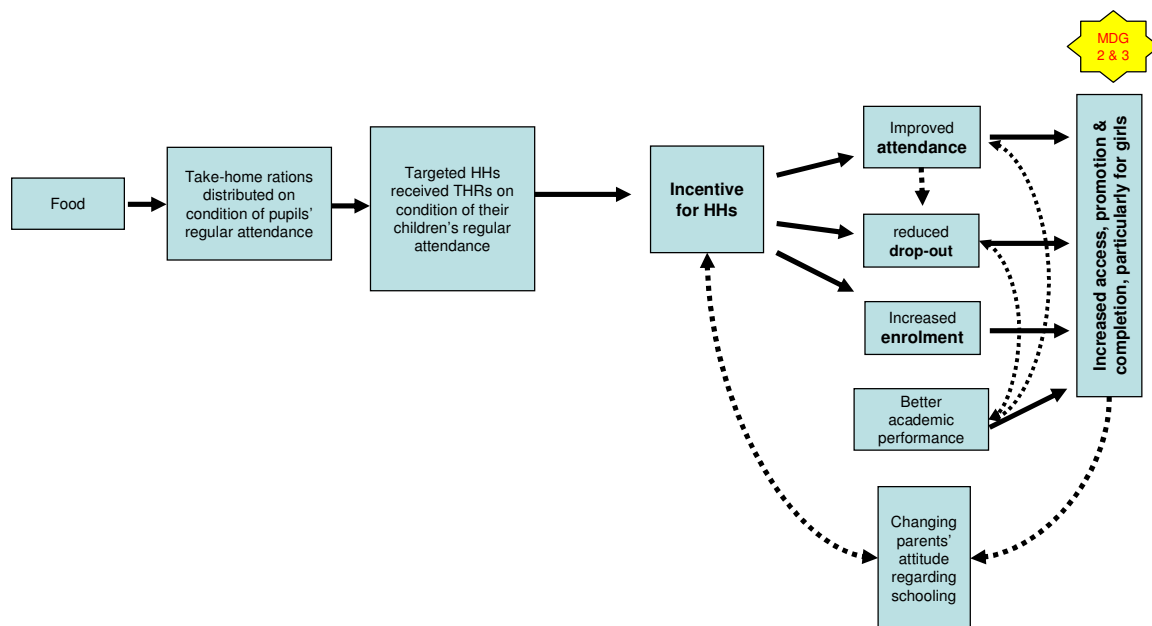


Figure 1: Food for Education impact theory for take-home rations

Impact of FFE programmes on girls' education

Evaluations of FFE programmes (see Adelman et al., 2006) have shown that FFE programmes lead to increased enrolment and attendance, of girls in particular, reduced drop-out particularly in the lower primary school grades, and for on-site meals or snacks programmes improved student learning capacity. Literature databases were searched to identify relevant studies on the physical and social benefits of FFE programmes to girls. The educational outcomes considered included school participation (including enrolment, attendance and drop-out). Primary school age children were the primary subjects of all the studies considered. Only one study was found on the impact of THR programmes highlighting the gap in evidence on this topic. Another paper was found on the comparative effects of the different modalities of FFE including THRs. One field-oriented evaluation of a WFP FFE programme was also identified in Pakistan and this is included in the main body of this paper as a case study.

In Bangladesh, IFPRI and the World Bank evaluated the impact of a Government FFE programme (Ahmed and Del Ninno, 2002) that covered over 2 million children in 2000. The enrolment in FFE programme schools was found to have increased by 35 percent over the two year period between the programme start and after its first year. This increase was driven by a remarkable 44 percent increase in girl's enrolment and by a 28 percent increase for boys. In non-programme schools enrolment increased by 2.5 percent (5.4 for girls and 0.1 for boys) during the same period. Attendance in FFE assisted schools was found to be 12 points higher than in non-assisted schools (70 percent compared to 58 percent respectively). Drop-out rates were also found to be 9 points lower in FFE assisted schools than in non-assisted schools (6 percent compared to 15 percent respectively). The overall programme costs were reported to be US\$0.10 per child per day, though no analysis of the costs was provided.

Another study analysed the comparative effects of the different modalities of FFE, including onsite meals combined with THRs (Gelli, Meir and Espejo, 2007). The results of this study of WFP monitoring and evaluation data showed that the provision of the FFE programme contributed to increasing absolute enrollment in WFP-assisted schools by 28 percent for girls and 22 percent for boys in the first year. Enrollment patterns after the first year varied according to the type of FFE program. Where provision of take-home rations for girls was combined with on-site feeding for all pupils, the increase in girls' absolute enrollment was

sustained at 30 percent after the first year. However, in schools providing on-site feeding alone, the rate of increase in absolute enrollment after the first year reverted to the rates of increase found in the year prior to FFE implementation. The provision of take-home rations also appeared to reduce the dropout rate of female students, particularly in the higher grades. In addition, an analysis of WFP project expenditures in 2005 (Gelli, Al-Shaiba and Espejo, 2007) showed that the average cost of WFP THR programmes was US\$29.94 per child per year, the most expensive of FFE modalities. However, the cost driver for THR was mostly the large volume of food provided (72 percent of total programme costs, compared to 58 percent for school meal programmes).

A study by Drèze and Kingdon from 2001 examined the effects of a wide range of determinants of school participation in rural northern India, focusing on school participation as a household decision. Amongst the school quality determinants, it was found that female school participation was about 15 percentage points higher when the local school provided a mid-day meal (MDM). Mid-day meals also were found to have a major positive effect on girls' grade attainment; chances of completing primary education were 30 percentage points higher for girls living in a village with MDM. However, the MDM did not affect the enrolment of boys. The study confirmed that female schooling is far more influenced by household economic status than boys' schooling: "parents are not generally opposed to female education but they are reluctant to pay for it. School meals could make a big difference here by reducing the private costs of schooling." An earlier study found that the noon meal programme in Tamil Nadu in India attracted more girls to attend school and improved the attendance of those already in school (Devadas, 1983).

The Pakistan Girls' Education Programme

Data on women's participation in education in Pakistan shows low girls' primary school net enrolment (59 percent) and female adult literacy rates (35 percent). Although female enrolment is increasing rapidly in all regions, girls' participation rates at all levels are lower than that of boys and gender gaps persist, particularly in rural areas (WFP Pakistan, 2005). Since 1995, WFP has been providing food assistance to support the efforts of the Government of Pakistan (GoP) to improve access, retention and completion of girls' primary education in 28 selected food-insecure districts of Pakistan, including seven districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The seven districts within the NWFP of Pakistan were identified by a WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) study as being amongst the most food insecure areas in the country. Women and girls in these areas face huge barriers in terms of access to education. At the time when the project started, female literacy in rural areas was only around 10 percent and the primary participation rate of girls less than 30 percent. As a result, a take-home rations programme was introduced within these seven districts with the objective of increasing enrolment, retention and completion at girls' primary schools. In 2005, THRs were provided monthly to 326,784 girls in 2,697 schools in vulnerable areas within 28 districts in the 5 provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and NWFP. Ration distribution was condition to regular school attendance. The monthly THRs consisted of a 4 litre tin of vegetable oil fortified with vitamin-A, and had an estimated value on the local market of US\$5.

Implementation Process

Under the Country Programme agreement signed by the GoP and WFP, WFP is responsible for providing the commodities for the FFE programme to the port of Karachi. The GoP is responsible for the food distribution to the 28 districts, as well as the management of the timely delivery of the food in good condition from all the district warehouses to the assisted schools. Project Implementation Units (PIUs) were set up by the GoP in each assisted province to run the FFE programme. WFP provided a small truck for each district at the beginning of the project to facilitate the logistics and implementation. However, because of the very difficult terrain in the targeted low profile districts of NWFP, ensuring a timely

supply of the THRS to the schools has been challenging. As a result, many schools received the oil supply every second month or even later. Only two oil tins at the most, are distributed to a student to cover the back-log of non-supply during the previous period. At the school level, the head teacher generally receives the oil rations and supervises the distribution to the pupils, conditional to monthly attendance rates of at least 80 percent. The entitlement of each student is checked against the school monthly attendance registers before the THR is distributed. The District Officers Education & Deputy or Assistant District Officers also pay monitoring visits to the schools and verify this aspect.

Programme costs

Project expenditure data was reviewed in order to estimate the costs of the FFE programme. WFP reports annually on project expenditures, alongside other project statistics, in its standard project reports (SPRs). Expenditures are broken down into commodity, transport, landside transport shipping and handling (LTSH), other direct operational costs (ODOC), direct support costs (DSC) - which added together form the direct project costs (DPC). A percentage of the DPC is then factored in as indirect support costs (ISC) to support WFP Headquarters. Table 1 presents a breakdown of total WFP expenditures in the country in 2005 alongside an estimate of the expenditure on the FFE programme, broken down by WFP cost category.

Table 1: 2005 WFP total and estimated FFE expenditures in Pakistan Country Programme

	Total WFP Country Programme expenditures (USD)	Estimated school feeding expenditure (USD)	% FFE over total expenditures
Commodities	11,667,043	6,133,819	82%
Transport	970,358	510,155	7%
LTSH	0	0	0%
ODOC	90,856	47,767	1%
DSC	621,934	326,975	4%
ISC	874,879	459,958	6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>14,225,070</i>	<i>7,478,673</i>	<i>100%</i>

Regarding the government contributions to the programme, the 2005 expenditures for each of the PIUs, divided into direct and indirect expenditures, are shown in Table 2Table 1. Direct expenditures have been divided into two parts i.e. (i) PIUs expenses which include staff salaries, renting of stores/warehouses, and other running expenses and (ii) the Transportation Cost incurred on the transportation of oil from Karachi to respective districts/tehsils/schools. Indirect expenditures include the expenditures (adjusted by proportion of time spent on programme activities) of other staff members of government who manage the FFE programme i.e. distribute oil, monitor its distribution and send reports to PIUs from Districts / tehsils / schools level whose salaries are not charged to PIUs. These staff members include the Executive District Officers, District Education Officers (Female), Deputy District Education Officers, Assistant Education Officers, Store keepers, School Teachers and Peons etc. These expenditures have been calculated by WFP Pakistan based on estimates following discussions with each respective PIU. As the entire FFE programme is managed by the provincial governments, PIU expenditures include all cost items required to deliver and manage the FFE programme. In 2005, school feeding activities accounted for 53 percent of food distributed in the whole WFP Country Programme. There were no further expenses incurred by the community in the running of the FFE programme.

Table 2: A breakdown of GoP budgeted expenses in 2004/2005 for FFE (THR) activities

Provinces	Direct Expenditures				Indirect Expenditures		Total	
	PIU		Transportation		PKR	US\$	PKR	US\$
	PKR	US\$	PKR	US\$				
Punjab	328,568	5,569	9,004,158	152,613	22,984,227	389,563	32,316,953	547,745
Sindh	6,444,556	109,230	2,490,927	42,219	23,795,400	403,312	32,730,883	554,761
Balochistan	7,612,000	129,017	1,778,225	30,139	20,183,829	342,099	29,574,054	501,255
AJK*	1,162,000	19,695	6,678,000	113,186	-	-	7,840,000	132,881
NWFP	3,306,300	56,039	3,495,000	59,237	25,194,939	427,033	31,996,239	542,309
Total	18,853,424	319,550	23,446,310	397,395	92,158,395	1,562,007	134,458,129	2,278,951

Having collected estimates for the different costs that are associated with the FFE programme, from the procurement of food down to the distribution of the THRs to the school girls, we estimated the total cost of FFE in Pakistan for 2005. WFP and GoP contributions for 2005 total \$9,757,624 USD, and dividing this by the number of beneficiaries resulted in \$29.85 USD per school-girl per year. In 2005 in Pakistan, food costs accounted for approximately 63 percent of the total cost. The share of WFP expenses over the total cost was 77 percent, with the remaining share covered by the GoP. The cost per beneficiary increases to \$63 USD per child per year if we adjust for full food distribution to all the planned beneficiaries, and assume perfect attendance.

Key outcomes and Impact

In 2004-2005, a set of surveys were carried out to assess educational and other socio-economic programme outcomes (WFP Pakistan, 2005). The evaluation included the collection and analysis of detailed school-level records from all the 826 WFP-assisted schools and a set of 79 randomly selected non-assisted schools (control) in the region. A secondary study of the available literature (GoP, WFP, and other partners) and data was also undertaken, including an analysis of data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and in-depth interviews with various partners involved such as government, WFP officials, community members, parents, teachers and students.

The evaluation showed that the programme had multiple benefits for girls' education:

- The overall enrolment at sampled schools increased by 135 percent between 1998/99 and 2003/04, whereas during the same period enrolment at control school increased by only 29 percent.
- There was a particularly strong increase in enrolment in the first grade of primary school (Kachi class): 211 percent at programme schools, compared to 5 percent in control school. This indicates that the programme was particularly successful in stimulating enrolment of girls who, until then, had never entered a school.
- On average, 88 percent of students attended school for twenty or more days per month (and were thus eligible for the take-home ration).
- Despite the positive effects on enrolment and attendance, completion of primary school remains a problem. Out of every 100 female students enrolling in 1998/99, only 44 percent reached grade 5. Although the primary school completion rate improved to 47 percent for the cohort starting school in 1999/2000, this only reflected a national trend, and programme schools actually showed worse results than control schools. This shows that the effect of the food incentive is not sufficiently strong to ensure that girls stay in school as they get older, and older girls of the family might be replaced by their younger siblings.

- The programme also broke new ground and increased awareness of girls' education. Before the programme started, 48 percent of households did not send any of their daughters to school; now all parents educate at least one daughter. While 38 percent of respondents said that the food incentive was the only reason for sending their daughter to school, 29 percent they would continue educating their daughters even if the programme stopped. 27 percent said that general hostility to girls' education in the community was no longer an issue.
- The food incentive was much appreciated by the families and provided them with tangible benefits. 32 percent of community members interviewed said that their income had increased, generating savings in the family budget and that they had more free time for agricultural activities or business.

Costs and benefits of the FFE programme

A basic framework was developed by WFP in order to evaluate the cost and benefits of the FFE intervention designed to support girls' education (Espejo et al., 2006). In this model, the benefits from FFE are assumed to consist of two components; the first is the monetary value of expected lifetime additional earnings after successful completion of primary school, whilst the second is the market value of a monthly take-home ration, provided on condition to a girls' school attendance throughout the programme duration. If we apply this cost-benefit framework to the FFE programme in Pakistan the results show that every USD spent on the FFE yields approximately 1.68 USD in benefits. An alternative to estimating the benefits of education through the monetary value of expected lifetime additional earnings after successful completion of primary school is to estimate the extra school days gained through the effect of a particular intervention aimed at increasing school participation. Comparisons of actual pupil attendance days to the perfect attendance day total can provide a single measure of school participation that encompasses enrolment, drop-out and absenteeism, the three main educational outcomes linked to FFE. A simple model developed to estimate the gain in pupil attendance days in FFE schools using averages for attendance, drop-out and enrolment resulted in an estimated 25 extra school days per child per year (WFP, 2007). This translates into approximately \$240 USD per additional year of schooling for girls in Pakistan. The cost and effects of the THR programme are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Estimated measures of cost-effectiveness of THRs in Pakistan (Source WFP Pakistan 2005, WFP SSFS 2003).

	Education		
	Enrolment	Attendance	Drop-out
Effect (per year)	22% increase	10% increase	5% decrease
	25 extra school days per year per pupil		
Cost	30-60 USD per child per year		

Lessons learnt

“Of all the programmes initiated in NWFP, this one has made the most visible impact. It has contributed a lot in this province” Fazle Manan, Director of Schools and Literacy from the Ministry of Education, when asked of WFP's assistance to girls' primary education.

The FFE programme triggered a marked increase in enrolment of girls in assisted schools in Pakistan. The enrolment more than doubled during the first three years of intervention. These types of incentives and awareness campaigns are imperative to boost girls' education, to improve female literacy and reduce the gender gap, especially in remote rural areas. However, the retention of girl students in the school system and further improvement of the participation rate is essential to achieve universal primary education.

As a result of the increased enrolment, the nearly empty school buildings have become more used, providing a better return of investment to the community and the government. However, the quality of education, itself a major incentive for sending children to school, has been constrained by the lack of teachers. Moreover, many of the assisted schools suffer from a want of adequate facilities, including furniture, water, sanitation, and boundary walls. This issue highlights the need to ensure that once children are in school, efforts are made to enhance the learning environment, as well as to support pupil attendance and retention.

The involvement of the community and the local government has been essential to mobilise the resources necessary for improving the school infrastructure. The FFE project has raised the awareness among the assisted communities about the importance of educating girls. Even the most reluctant parents are now sending their daughters to school. This change in attitude is a remarkable achievement against the backdrop of the social and cultural taboos that had prohibited the education of girls in the past.

The mothers of the girl students now get out of their homes and visit schools to enquire about the progress of their daughters. Most of the females in far-flung rural areas were previously not allowed to step outside their homes; now girls are going to schools and their elderly female relatives visit schools to enquire about the attendance, progress in studies and probable dates of supply of oil. This change in social attitude and behaviour is an important achievement of the programme.

Future plans

The impact of the THR programme in supporting access to education for girls in rural, food insecure areas of Pakistan has been remarkable. Though WFP was involved in the design, management and implementation the FFE intervention, the ownership of the overall programme was, through the course of the programme, handed over to the Government of Pakistan. As of 2005, project implementation units staffed with senior level Government officials took-over the full responsibility of the programme in terms of food delivery to schools, programme monitoring and reporting. Financial contributions from the Government of Pakistan have also been essential to the success of the programme to date. The successful hand-over of the programme management will be critical to ensure the sustainability of the FFE programme in the future.



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