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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global Child Nutrition Forum:
School Feeding Development Conference

July 17-22, 2008
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“Education and democracy may be the most powerful combatants in the war on hunger and poverty... A nutritious balanced school lunch for every child is the best investment we can make in the health, education and global society of the future.”
— Senator George S. McGovern

The Need is Daunting

At any given moment, over 350 million children in the world are hungry...and every single day, as many as 18,000 perish from malnutrition and hunger-related diseases.

Children living in poverty are often lucky to have even one meal per day, and in many cases, this meal is available only at school. However, throughout the developing world, 115 million children are unable to attend school.

School feeding programs are serving as lifelines to millions of disadvantaged children throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Effective school feeding programs:

- alleviate hunger
- improve children’s nutrition and ability to learn
- increase enrollments by motivating parents to send their children to school and
- promote community development and linkages between schools and local agricultural producers.

GCNF’s Response

In recognition of the vast scope of childhood hunger worldwide, the national School Nutrition Association (SNA) founded the Global Child Nutrition Foundation in 2006. From its more than 60 years of experience in feeding millions of American school children, SNA recognized the substantial role that well-run school feeding programs can play in improving children’s health, enhancing their performance in school, and helping children to thrive. GCNF is helping meet the daunting challenge of bringing nutrition, educational opportunity and hope to children worldwide.

GCNF’s mission is simple but clear: **To expand opportunities for the world’s children to receive adequate nutrition for learning and achieving their potential.**

GCNF’s Global Child Nutrition Forum Builds School Feeding Technical Capacity and Commitment

GCNF’s flagship program is its Global Child Nutrition Forum, hosted since 1997 by the School Nutrition Association and since 2006 by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation. The Global Child Nutrition Forum provides a rare opportunity for international leaders to help them build capacity and commitment towards advancing school feeding programs and policies. Over its first decade, the Forum has brought together over 200 governmental and non-governmental leaders from countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East to assist them in their efforts to establish or expand sustainable school feeding programs in their countries.

Delegates to the Global Child Nutrition Forum receive technical assistance in program planning, development and operations. They learn how others are successfully meeting challenges through presentations, case studies, and discussion with fellow delegates. Also, through use of a school feeding toolkit, they glean insights on building governmental commitment toward school feeding. Through participating in GCNF’s Forum, delegates become members of a growing global alliance of child nutrition and school feeding advocates.

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Global Perspectives on School Feeding

■ Speaker: **Jose Antonio Castillo**, Programme Officer, United Nations World Food Programme

Overview

Diverse new global challenges—including unprecedented food and energy inflation—are changing the face of world hunger. The food price crisis has made adequate nourishment inaccessible to many people in the poorest nations, pushed about 100 million people deeper into poverty, and may set back progress toward the U.N.'s 2015 Millennium Development Goals by seven years. Many of the hardest-hit countries are in Africa. The ramifications for education are dire.

School feeding programs can be part of the solution to alleviating poverty and promoting economic development. The World Food Programme seeks to help governments institute and manage school meal programs that develop their productive capabilities and advance their national objectives.

Context

Mr. Castillo described the global challenges exacerbating poverty, hunger, and malnutrition in many under-developed nations, outlined the rationale for a school-feeding response, and explained how the World Food Programme is helping governments institute school feeding programs to advance their national interests.

Key Points

- **Lack of education, malnutrition, and poor health are interrelated—and both a cause and consequence of poverty.**

Three interrelated problems, both caused by poverty and perpetuating it, are tethering the advancement of many developing nations around the world: lack of education, malnutrition, and poor health. They are problems of enormous scale.

A 2007 UNESCO report illustrates just how intertwined these problems are. Of the world's 72 million school-aged children who are not in school, a majority (62%) are underweight, about half (48%-56%) are stunted, and slightly more than half (53%) suffer from iron deficiency anemia, while 30% are infected with parasites.

More of these children are girls (57%) than boys, and nearly all (95%) live in developing countries.

- **Newly emergent global challenges have exacerbated world hunger.**

Recent years have brought an onslaught of diverse new challenges, global in scope, that are changing the face of world hunger. These challenges include:

- *Unprecedented rates of food and fuel inflation have escalated hunger and poverty.* Increased production of biofuels has increased competition for food resources, spiking prices. Higher energy costs have affected the resources of

governments, NGOs, corporations, and households the world over.

- *Food reserves are at their lowest levels in 30 years.* Some reasons: commodity market speculation, creating extreme volatility; U.S. dollar weakness; and countries' imposition of export bans/restrictions.
- *The world is consuming more food than it is producing.* Unprecedented demand for food from emerging economies (as newly emergent middle classes now have the resources to eat more proteins) has contributed to this problem.
- *More frequent weather disasters have compounded these problems.* Recent years' droughts, floods, and earthquakes have decimated households and farms in afflicted regions, exacerbating poverty and reducing food productive capacity.

These challenges have created a "new face of hunger."

- **The "new face of hunger" has dire consequences for education in developing countries.**

Now chronic hunger is more rampant, severe, and threatening to developing nations' aspirations:

- *Hunger is not just a problem of food availability but one of food accessibility.* Many nations have sufficient food for their populations, but for many families—rural and urban—who rely on markets for their food, less accessible pricing means necessary cutbacks in important other areas (such as healthcare and sending children to school) as well as substitution of less nutritious foods.
- *About 100 million people have been pushed deeper into poverty, per World Bank estimates.* Even before the food price hikes of 2008, many in poor countries had been spending 60% or more of their budgets on food; about 1 billion people worldwide live on less than US\$1 per day.
- *High prices may set back by seven years progress toward the U.N.'s 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).* Many nations have made substantial progress toward these goals, which include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and reducing child mortality.
- *Many of the countries expected to suffer most are in Africa.* Price rises are expected to have the most severe direct impacts in ten African nations—Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, the Gambia, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Zimbabwe—as well as Cuba, Haiti, Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Yemen.

This new face of hunger has reduced disadvantaged households' purchasing power, with harmful ripple effects on education in developing nations:

- The poorest students will be become more likely to drop out or attend school less often.

- Food insecure students in school will face tougher obstacles to learning.
- Child labor will escalate.
- The numbers of street children will rise.
- The gains made by multi-year efforts to stem these problems may be lost.

▪ **School feeding programs should be promoted as a key response to the world's food crisis.**

School feeding programs are an appropriate response for governments and NGOs trying to improve the conditions that tether populations to poverty and prevent nations from developing economically. Such programs have far-reaching, transformative benefits for students, families, communities, and local economies:

- School feeding helps attract and retain students.
- Meals offering the micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals that food-insecure families cannot provide help children learn, grow, and stay healthy.
- School feeding promotes patriotism and loyalty to community (so students fortunate enough to pursue higher-education opportunities as adults may return to help their communities).
- Meal programs can transform schools into centers that promote the health of the entire community. Mealtimes provide opportunities for addressing children's health needs (e.g., de-worming) and health education needs. Teachers can be trained to impart important health-promoting information about nutrition, malaria and HIV prevention, water and sanitation, etc., which children take home to their families. Use of volunteers to serve meals strengthens community ties.
- Meal programs increase demand for the products of small local farmers, strengthening the local economy.

"Child-friendly schools are our vision—with safe and nutritious food, clean water, proper sanitation, school gardens, and a clean school environment."

— Jose Antonio Castillo

▪ **The World Food Programme has adopted a new framework for school feeding that supports nations' broader objectives.**

The U.N.'s World Food Programme has helped many of the poorest nations advance toward the U.N.'s MDGs. During 2007,

19.3 million school children benefited from the school feeding programs it operates in partnership with governments and NGOs.

The WFP recently adopted a new framework for school feeding programs, which represents a broadening of focus beyond education toward helping to develop nations' own capacities and supporting their national goals and priorities. This new approach involves:

- Analyzing the food security situations of populations to better understand contextual factors that contribute to the problem in each region or country.
- Compiling and sharing best practices and experiences among countries and regions.
- Adapting school feeding programs to meet the need of those most severely hit by high food prices.
- Providing policy and operational advice to countries.
- Enhancing the dialogue with governments to promote, expand, and efficiently manage school feeding programs.
- Linking school feeding with local agricultural production and climate-friendly activities.
- Enhancing partnerships with key organizations focused on providing governments with capacity development assistance.
- Advocating for donor assistance.

Recent WFP initiatives in conjunction with the new framework include:

- The WFP Food Security Analysis, which is crucial to shaping the organization's response to the new global challenges mentioned.
- Assessments to better understand issues affecting commodity accessibility for specific populations.
- The Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative to support local food procurement.
- Cash transfer and food voucher programs being piloted in six countries.
- The "Fill the Cup" campaign to raise awareness of and combat child hunger.
- Partnership with the Brazilian government to support the capacity development of other countries.

Country Case Study: Brazil Model

■ Speaker: **Daniel Balaban**, President, National Fund for Education Development (Brazil)

Overview

Brazil's school feeding program is well developed and provides a model for other countries to consider. From no program in 1955 to a program for poor municipalities in 1974, Brazil now has a universal school feeding program. It is supported by law, centrally funded, but decentrally administered by local School Feeding Councils, which follow clear rules. The program is based on principles of universal coverage, continuity of operations, and equality.

Context

Mr. Balaban shared the evolution and operation of Brazil's universal school feeding program.

Key Points

- **Universal school feeding is legally mandated and is funded by Brazil's central government.**

Brazil's population of 187 million includes 43 million students who attend 165,000 schools. Of these schools, 20% are middle and secondary schools (with 54% of the students) and 80% are below the middle-school level (46% of students).

In 1955, school feeding was a regional humanitarian campaign based on international donations. By 1974, school feeding for poor municipalities came from Brazil's budget. But in 1994, a universal program was executed with resources transferred from the central government to states and municipalities based on the number of students. Brazil's school feeding program is solidly grounded in law and supported by the federal government.

"A school has to have meals for students; it's part of the law."

— Daniel Balaban

The laws about school feeding require that 20% of a student's daily nutritional needs be provided by the program. The program currently serves 40.6 million children and in 2008 will receive the equivalent of US\$0.13 per student per day from the Brazilian government; states and municipalities will contribute an additional \$0.06.

The principles on which Brazil's school feeding program are based are:

- *Universality.* The belief that everyone has a basic human right to food.

- *Continuity.* The idea that the school feeding program should be continuous throughout the school year.
- *Equality.* That all students should have the same treatment.
- *Decentralization.* That federal funds should be transferred to local managers for program implementation.
- *Social control.* That the school feeding program should be controlled locally by School Feeding Councils.

Among the objectives of Brazil's school feeding program are to attend to at least 20% of children's daily nutritional needs, to respect regional habits, to promote children's health and healthy habits, to improve attendance, and to assist local economies.

- **The school feeding programs are managed locally, but must adhere to certain standards.**

School feeding is funded nationally but is administered and managed locally. Each federal district, state, and municipality must institute and maintain a School Feeding Council. This council represents families, teachers, civil society, the executive branch, and the legislative branch. In total there are about 70,000 School Feeding Council members in Brazil.

These councils approve the accounts, monitor schools' health and sanitary conditions, observe the development of menus, and alert authorities regarding any problems. Among the rules that have to be followed: nutritionists are responsible for menus; 70% of any menu is basic products (preferably fruits and vegetables); local production is favored; and healthy practices and school gardens are encouraged. Another rule is that 70% of students must like the food served at school or it has to be changed.

The way the program operates is that money is transferred each month to federal districts, states, and municipalities, which then purchase the best-quality food at the best price, taking into account regional preferences. The food is then distributed to and prepared at the schools.

- **Despite the success of Brazil's school feeding program, there remain further opportunities for improvement.**

Through its school feeding program, Brazil has fulfilled its commitments to Millennium Development Goals #1 and #4. Next steps for the program include improving assessment and monitoring processes and instituting better formal and social controls.

In addition, Brazil is providing technical assistance to nations in Africa and Latin America that are attempting to implement similar school feeding programs.

Case Study: School Feeding Programmes— A Catalyst for Sustainable Development

■ Speaker: **Ulla Holm**, Global Director, Tetra Pak Food for Development

Overview

Tetra Pak believes that public/private partnerships can provide the solutions developing nations need to advance economically and improve the health, education, and living standards of their populations. The company's Food for Development office employs a unique, integrated value chain model to support agricultural/dairy development, alleviate hunger and malnutrition, and raise communities out of poverty. School feeding programs are integral to the solution.

Context

Ms. Holm discussed the objectives, innovative methods, and success stories of Tetra Pak's Food for Development Office.

Background

The Tetra Pak Group—a division of Tetra Laval—is a world leader in the development, manufacture, and sale of systems for the processing, packaging, and distribution of milk, juice, and other liquid food products. Tetra Pak pioneered aseptic packaging that keeps product fresh for months without refrigeration or preservatives, is cost-effective for transport and storage, and has minimal environmental impact. During 2007, the company processed and packed 190 million liters in 376 million packages per day in more than 150 countries around the world.

Tetra Pak has a long tradition of involvement in school feeding programs, with experience in more than 50 countries. Over 45 million school children worldwide receive milk in Tetra Pak packaging, about half (22 million) in developing countries.

Key Points

- **Tetra Pak believes public/private partnerships are the way out of poverty for developing nations.**

Tetra Pak believes that the best way to promote sustainable social and economic development is by building strong partnerships between the public and private sector. With that philosophy at its core, Tetra Pak's Food for Development Office works with governments, private industry, NGOs, and development agencies at local and global levels to implement programs targeted at building up the agricultural/dairy industries of developing nations. Through economic development, the company seeks to help nations alleviate poverty as well as expand markets for Tetra Laval's products.

"We believe the only way we can reduce poverty and stimulate economic development [is by creating] strong partnerships between the public and private sector—actually use the private sector as the engine for growth."

— Ulla Holm

Tetra Pak's Food for Development Office received the 2006 World Business Award for its work supporting the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

- **Tetra Pak's Food for Development uses a "Cow to Consumer" value chain model to catalyze rural development.**

Food for Development programs target: 1) improved health and nutrition via school feeding programs, malnutrition and disease prevention, and emergency relief; and 2) poverty alleviation via agricultural development, private-sector development, and job creation.

To execute these programs, Tetra Pak works with sister company DeLaval—a full-service supplier to dairy farmers—and its other partners to employ a unique "Cow to Consumer" value chain model. Solutions are tailored to regional economies' specific needs and integrated at every link of the value chain:

- *Food production: agricultural development.* Initiatives at the production level target agricultural development. Activities include farmer training and education and equipment financing. Participating farmers are provided with assurance that there will be markets for the products they produce.
- *Food processing: private-sector development.* Dairy processors commit to pay farmers more for milk, which helps move farmers beyond subsistence levels. In exchange, dairies receive plant and equipment financing and management support/training (for example, help creating business plans).
- *Food distribution: market development.* Distributors are provided with support to develop and expand their markets.

"We help local entrepreneurs set up business plans; we loan equipment; we extend financing; we share our knowledge; we provide practical training; and we assist with market development."

— Ulla Holm

- *School feeding programs: food security, nutrition, and nations' capacity building.* School feeding programs are the catalysts to stimulate demand for locally produced foods and also improve the health and education of populations. Food for Development makes its case for such programs to governments and works with them to develop a "business plan" for programs' execution—a case supported by ample evidence that the benefits of implementing school feeding programs outweigh the costs. These programs have been shown to:

- Stimulate agricultural development.
- Promote private-sector investments in dairy processing, leading to job creation and more tax revenue.
- Reduce dependence on imports.
- Improve the health and education of populations, and reduce the high cost of poverty for governments.

- Promote Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expansion, increasing GDP by an average 2-3 percentage points as a result of reduced malnutrition.

“The integration of public/private partnership is the model for poverty reduction through local production—to integrate food production with food distribution and school feeding.”

— Ulla Holm

In Kenya, a school-based feeding program from 1979 to 1998 created both a milk-drinking generation and a dairy industry. A similar program in Thailand from 1988 to 2003 led to the creation of 250,000 jobs.

- **This solution is creating jobs, reducing poverty, raising education standards, and improving health across the globe.**

With this integrated model, Food for Development has stimulated rural development, reduced poverty, raised educational standards, and improved the health of millions of people in numerous countries. A few of the many success stories:

- *Guatemala.* A school feeding program piloted by the government (after a Food for Development seminar to educate officials) has boosted the school attendance, health, and

learning capacity of Guatemalan children as well as demand for locally produced milk, benefiting farmers. Food for Development has begun providing farmers with technical assistance as well.

- *Mumbai, India.* Food for Development helped the bidders who won a school milk program contract create an efficient system for milk distribution from pre-production to post-consumption waste management.

- *Bangladesh.* Started by donors in 2002, this school milk program has benefited farmers, created jobs (an estimated 14.4 jobs per 100 liters of milk distributed), and increased children’s school attendance and academic performance.

In addition, Food for Development is working with partners to develop and supply fortified milk products for school feeding programs in the West Bank/Gaza, South Africa, and Nigeria. The integrated value chain model is being adapted to produce cassava- versus milk-based fortified beverages for the program in Nigeria. This has opened the door to new product development opportunities for Tetra Pak, which is working on fortified milk-alternative beverages for other countries (e.g., using whey in Jamaica, soy in Peru and Venezuela, and corn and wheat in Colombia).

Case Study: Home-grown School Feeding Programme in Africa

■ Speaker: **Emmanuel Ohene Afoakwa**, University of Ghana

Overview

School feeding programs can help developing nations reduce poverty and achieve United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Particularly promising are programs linked to local agricultural development, or “home-grown school feeding” programs, which the U.N. recommends as a way to help nations alleviate poverty and meet their Millennium Development Goals.

Africa sorely needs more such programs, and the survival of those that already exist is uncertain. African Network for School Feeding Programmes (ANSFEP) was formed at the 2006 GCNF to help ensure these programs’ sustainability, but progress to date has proven elusive.

Context

Mr. Afoakwa provided a snapshot of the state of school feeding programs in Africa, emphasizing the need for home-grown solutions that promote local economic development as well as combat child hunger.

Key Points

- **Several of Africa’s largest problems are both causes and consequences of poverty.**

Africa’s primary challenges stem from poverty:

- *Lack of education.* Most children in Africa—77 million—are not in school; 49% of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 57% are girls.
- *Malnutrition.* Proper nutrition is critical for optimal growth, development, and the general well-being and academic performance of children, while malnutrition is associated with numerous health and developmental problems. Malnourished children become adults with limited opportunities and capacities. About 300 million children in the world today are chronically hungry.
- *Poor health.* HIV/AIDS, malaria, parasitic infections, anemia, and other micronutrient deficiencies are limiting the human potential of millions of Africans, and tethering the economic potential of African nations.

- **The U.N. recommends home-grown school feeding as a way to help pull nations out of extreme poverty.**

The widespread scope of poverty-related problems in Africa and other countries around the world caused the U.N. in 2000 to challenge nations to meet eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

In 2003, the Millennium Project Task Force on Hunger proposed expansion of school meal programs as “quick impact initiatives” that could help governments make rapid progress toward

achieving the MDGs. The task force recommended linking school feeding with local agricultural development via:

- Purchase of locally and domestically produced food.
- Planting of school gardens.
- Incorporation of agriculture into school curricula.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

- **Some organizations have spearheaded home-grown school feeding in Africa, but programs’ futures are uncertain.**

In 2007, 42 African countries had school feeding programs, which collectively served 25 million children, but not all incorporated the home-grown school feeding solution recommended by the U.N. Moreover, many of these programs would not be possible without administrative and resource assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP), assistance that cannot continue indefinitely. In fact, the WFP phased out its aid to seven African nations in July 2006.

However, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) together with the WFP has created the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which has piloted home-grown school feeding programs in ten African nations: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia. The target is that 20% of African nations will have home-grown school feeding programs by 2008, modeled after approaches taken in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and other nations.

Such programs use local recipes and locally produced food, except in countries where unique problems (famine, drought, conflict, etc.) necessitate international food sourcing. Community members prepare and serve the often-fortified meals of maize, rice, yams, beans, legumes, and cassava, sometimes supplemented with animal protein.

- **ANSFEP aims to ensure the sustainability of Africa’s school feeding programs, to help secure its nations’ advancement.**

To ensure the long-term sustainability of Africa’s school feeding programs, another organization was formed in July 2006 at the Global Child Nutrition Forum—the African Network for School Feeding Programmes (ANSFEP). ANSFEP’s mission is to expand the opportunities of African school children to receive adequate nutrition; its vision, to promote the rights of the African child to food and freedom from hunger. To these ends, the organization’s activities focus on:

- *Feeding program management.* Implementation issues and prevention of abuse, fraud, and waste.
- *Advocacy.* Educating governments and international organizations about the need to support school feeding.
- *Policies/legislation.* Including establishment of national program frameworks that outlive changing political administrations, institutional mechanisms to ensure program sustainability, and administrative program infrastructures.

Sustainability of school feeding programs is crucial for a nation to reap the long-term benefits in terms of economic development that such programs can yield. This is because few people who had been fed for years in school as a youngster would turn their back on the problems of their childhood communities once they become an educated adult. Many will return with their skills and resources to improve conditions in their native countries.

"If 40% more children are being drawn to school as a result of the school feeding program, imagine the difference we're going to make if the program continues 10 or 20 years. . . . We are not just educating children; we are [cultivating] patriotism."

— Emmanuel Ohene Afoakwa

ANSFEP's sustainability strategies include promoting government commitment to school feeding programs, community participation in these programs, and private sector involvement. The organization also recognizes the need to provide support

and training, both to local entrepreneurs so that they can develop nations' economic capacities and to feeding program leadership.

- **In the face of daunting challenges, progress to date has proven elusive.**

While ANSFEP recognizes what needs to be done, to date its efforts have been stymied by formidable difficulties, including:

- Securing the political will of governments to launch school feeding programs in countries without them.
- Winning the confidence of development partners and other stakeholders for policy support.
- Infrastructure to handle increasing student enrollment.
- Storage of surplus food production.
- Generating sound and reliable data on food production and usage.
- Lack of skilled human resources for feeding program management.
- Building the capacity of governments to take full ownership and responsibility.
- Funding for each country-wide, capital-intensive program.

"If you don't put the first foot forward, you remain standing. Our journey must begin!"

— Emmanuel Ohene Afoakwa

Case Study: Connecting School Feeding Programs with Local Agricultural Development in India: Examples and Challenges

■ Speaker: **Daniel Gustafson**, Director, Liaison Office for North America, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Overview

Much of India's population lives in poverty, and nearly half of young children (under three) are undernourished. The nation's school meal program reflects the Indian government's commitment to provide one hot meal per day to every school-aged child. This program is an essential element to buoying food security among India's most vulnerable groups. It serves other beneficial purposes as well—boosting employment, literacy, and health.

But India's developmental objectives could be advanced even further by linking school meal programs to agricultural development. To realize their full potential, these programs should be viewed in educational, social, and economic contexts.

Context

Mr. Gustafson supplied background on India's school feeding program before distilling feedback from an online community of India's development professionals asked about the idea of integrating the school meal program with local agricultural production objectives.

Key Points

- **With a school meal program in place, India has the framework for linking school feeding to local farm production.**

About one-fourth of India's population lives below the poverty line and about one-fifth is malnourished. Among women, more than one-third are undernourished, as are nearly half of the nation's children under three years old. Poor households on average spent 70% of income on food even before the recent food price crisis. Yet India is a nation with large cereal surpluses and great regional variation in poverty numbers.

India has effective food distribution programs, on which the nation spends \$5-\$10 billion per year—more than it spends on health care. Among these programs, the school feeding program Mid Day Meal (MDM), run by the Ministry of Education and administered through state agencies, reflects the Indian government's commitment to provide one meal per day to every school-aged child.

How the MDM works: the national government—via the Food Corporation of India—supplies the grains that comprise the bulk of the meal free of cost to schools; 2.6 million tons are distributed annually to 120 million children, providing each with 450 calories. States give schools funds (equating to US\$0.05 per student per day) for the purchase of vegetables, proteins, etc., to round out the meal. For a small village school of 50-100 students, this is not much money—but it can support a garden or local production options.

- **Such integration would expand the benefits of school feeding and boost local economic development.**

Although the MDM was introduced in India as an incentive for attending school, it is gaining attention as a way to achieve the dual purpose of improving school children's nutritional intake and boosting local agricultural production.

Development professionals (members of the Solution Exchange, a collaborative online network created by the U.N. to help India achieve Millennium Development Goals), responding to a query about the benefits and challenges of integrating India's school meal program into local agricultural production/marketing and national policy, see great value in the nation's MDM program. The program is essential to buoying food security among India's most vulnerable groups and serves multiple other beneficial purposes—boosting employment, literacy, and health. But incremental benefits are achievable by linking the MDM program to agricultural development, such as:

- Increasing local production of vegetables and other non-grain foods (as the government supplies meal program grains).
- Lowering the costs and improving the quality of the meal program.
- Raising awareness of and interest in the meal program.
- Increasing awareness of the importance of vegetables in the diet.
- Promoting better nutrition at home—with children serving as change agents for the family by sharing learnings at home.
- Increasing the agricultural aptitude of students and communities.
- Raising the prestige of agriculture-related professions.
- Increasing public and private civil society interaction and strengthening community ties.
- Expanding the role of local NGOs in supporting village schools and their activities.

"Discussants welcomed the idea of linking school feeding programs to agricultural development . . . They felt it would not only ensure sustainability of these programs but also strengthen the local economy, improve students' nutrition, and improve stakeholder awareness and motivation."

— Daniel Gustafson

Respondents also cited limitations on the potential benefits of integrating the MDM to rural development initiatives. For instance, Indian diets are 90% cereal-based; since the central government supplies grains to school meal programs for free, the stimulus from sourcing locally would be limited to the vegetables,

oils, and proteins that comprise the remaining 10% of meals. Other limitations relate to:

- The costs of implementing local meal sourcing solutions.
- The local availability of required ingredients.
- Cultural context barriers.
- Government restrictions on public-private partnerships and civil society participation.

▪ **School feeding programs should be viewed from educational, social, and economic perspectives.**

Respondents offered numerous recommendations for successfully marrying school feeding programs to activities to spur local agriculture development. Solutions involved initiatives in the areas of education, national policy, and innovative school-community and public-private partnerships. Some of the ideas:

- *Education.* Teaching children about farming and developing local sources of nutritious foods.
- *Policy.* Embedding government initiatives to integrate school feeding with agricultural production into national policies and strategies that endure beyond changing political administrations.
- *School/community/agricultural collaborations for food production.* Cultivating school kitchens and gardens managed by local farmers, women's self-help groups (or SHGs, an active presence in India), and children; exploring contract farming options to supply meal program food; and involving schools in running farms.
- *Community and private-sector involvement in food procurement.* Having SHGs organize and manage local

production centers to ensure consistent supplies of food; encouraging the development of private-public partnerships to secure fresh food; developing village-level grain banks in tribal areas to promote local food procurement; and implementing a voucher system for food procurement from local retailers.

Overall, respondents felt that governments must view school feeding programs from several angles: educational, social, and economic. Such a multi-faceted perspective opens up new possibilities for achieving a nation's development goals through school feeding programs.

"Programs of this nature . . . make an excellent case for institutionalizing backward linkages, which can pave the way for increasing [agricultural] productivity and income, employment opportunities, and ensuring regular, quality supplies of local produce for school children."

— Daniel Gustafson

Other Important Point

- **A solution for better solutions.** The Solution Exchange is an initiative of the United Nations Agencies in India to harness the power and passion of communities of practice to help attain India's development objectives. Members representing a wide range of development professionals share best practices, collaborate, and tap each other's knowledge and experiences to contribute more effectively, individually and collectively, to the nation's development challenges.

Panel: The Food Crisis and Global Hunger

- Moderator: **Gene White**, Global Child Nutrition Foundation
- Speakers: **Daniel Gustafson**, Director, Liaison Office for North America, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Arlene Mitchell, Senior Program Officer, Agricultural Development, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Kent Holt, Director of Regulatory Affairs, Solae
Jose Antonio Castillo, Programme Officer, United Nations World Food Programme

Overview

Developing nations have been hit disproportionately hard by the extreme food inflation of the past year, which is not expected to abate substantively over the next decade. Less accessible food means more prevalent poverty, malnutrition, illness, and death as fewer families than previously are able to meet their needs for sustenance, healthcare, and education. On a national level, the prospect of achieving Millennial Development Goals for many nations dims.

Help for governments of developing nations is available. The U.N. has identified measures that can ameliorate the situation. Private companies like Solae desire to launch innovative win/win public-private partnerships to bring more children life-sustaining nourishment. International aid organizations such as The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are providing the leadership and direction to illuminate the paths toward solutions as well as providing supportive resources needed to get there.

Context

From their various vantage points, the panelists shared perceptions on the ramifications of recent high commodity price inflation for developing nations and the people within them.

Daniel Gustafson—The U.N. Perspective

- **Commodity prices have surged worldwide in recent years, with particularly steep spikes since January 2008.**

The price of cereals, or food grains, has doubled since January 2006—with 60% of that increase happening between January and May 2008. Maize has doubled in price since a year ago, and rice has tripled.

Some of the reasons include the high cost of energy and fertilizer, the weakness of the U.S. dollar, rising demand for biofuels, low levels of food stocks, speculative activity, rising demand owing to rising incomes around the globe, and the U.S. financial crisis.

- **Developing nations have been disproportionately affected.**

The impact of high food prices has been particularly hard-felt by vulnerable families that spend a high percentage of their income on food. In the U.S., about 7%-10% of households' disposable income goes to food; this compares with 75%-80% among vulnerable populations. A common misconception in the U.S. is that higher prices benefit small farmers in developing nations—but the majority are net buyers versus net sellers of food and thus also suffer. Just as the "new face of hunger" has been

widening the income distribution gap between developing nations' urban and rural populations, it has also between widening the gap within rural communities between net buyers and sellers of food.

- **Poverty levels surge when food prices do.**

The impact of the food price crisis varies by countries' poverty levels. That is because poverty levels are calculated partly as a function of how much a basket of food costs, so rising food prices automatically boost poverty levels. But the effect is more than a mathematical one: the human toll of poverty increases when food prices spike as well.

"The poverty level . . . is determined by how much it costs for a basic basket of food. When the price of that basket goes up, it's the same basket, but you have an increase in poverty by definition. And in a real sense, you have an increase in poverty that can be dramatic."

— Daniel Gustafson

For perspective on how much high food inflation has increased poverty, take Honduras. There, the World Bank estimates that the percentage of that nation's population that is living below the poverty level has risen by four percentage points to 55%. For nations where poverty is more common than not (Sierra Leone, for example, with a 69% rate), having 4% more of the population join the ranks of the impoverished represents a huge toll in societal, economic, and human terms.

- **What can be done to ameliorate the situation?**

With the food prices likely to remain high for the next decade, measures must be taken by governments and others to ameliorate conditions, such as:

- *Protect the World Food Programme's ability to afford distributing food.* Innovative programs can help, such as conditional cash transfers and food-for-work schemes.
- *Stimulate near-term agricultural production* via subsidized fertilizer, education/marketing programs focused on fertilizer, seed distribution, and so on.
- *Boost longer-term agricultural development* by increasing governmental expenditures on agriculture.
- *Reform biofuel policies* in the U.S. and Europe. These governments should revisit their biofuel policies—particularly the subsidies and mandates—since the sources of biofuel compete with food products.
- *Lift export restrictions* via a cooperative international trade agreement (perhaps coordinated by the U.N.). Countries at

such times, rather than just looking at their own needs, should take a broader perspective.

- **Even if this food price situation improves, hunger, poverty, and malnutrition will not without redoubled efforts.**

Even if food prices were to decrease, the improved conditions would be no indicator of progress on the preexisting problems. It would simply “get us back to where we were.” How to make progress on MDGs and other national objectives would remain a serious challenge.

“A serious problem of hunger and malnutrition in the world existed prior to this price rise. . . . [A] decrease in prices would not do anything to improve the underlying situation: the 850 million people who were malnourished earlier.”

— Daniel Gustafson

Arlene Mitchell—The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Perspective

- **The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation believes everyone has a right to healthcare and education.**

The family is concerned about poverty and fairness. It believes that everyone should have equal access to healthcare and education, and that poverty is a big impediment to that goal. Increasing the income of small farmers has been the cornerstone of the Foundation’s efforts in one area, agriculture development.

- **The food crisis presents opportunity for small farmers and traders in Africa and other developing nations.**

But this opportunity is not dribbling down from those who are managing to capitalize on high prices to the small African village farmer or entrepreneur.

- **The Gates Foundation is working to help stimulate agricultural development in disadvantaged communities.**

Four pillars of the Foundation’s agricultural development efforts are focused on correcting this situation. These are:

- *Advocating for agriculture investment.* The message about the importance of long-term investment in agriculture must reach the ears of governments and others in positions to act. Talking about agriculture in the context of school feeding is a good place to start, because there is awareness that agriculture, nutrition, education, and health are intertwined and shouldn’t be treated as separate issues.

“We should be including agriculture in every conversation we have because it has been so neglected. If we don’t put it on the table constantly, it will slip off the agenda.”

— Arlene Mitchell

- *Creating new agricultural capacity.* The Gates Foundation and other donors have created The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). On AGRA’s agenda are programs related to improving seeds, soil fertility, and markets for farm products.

- *Investing in agriculture education.* The Foundation is investing in agriculture scholarships and in developing universities’ agriculture curriculums, in order to increase the ranks of agriculturists.

- *Investing in agricultural productivity.* The Foundation is working with the World Food Programme to change its buying practices such that WFP resources will go to the communities, supporting local small farm productivity. It is also looking at strengthening procedures to develop external and regional markets for African farm products. Policy research and advocacy efforts to support these initiatives are also being developed.

Ken Holt—The Solae/Private-Sector Perspective

- **Rapidly increasing world demand for protein is staining global agricultural capacity.**

In recent decades, rapid rates of population and income growth have been driving rapid rises in global consumption of meat and milk. Continuation of these trends will create a problem of inadequate agricultural capacity to meet demand.

- **Meat production is an inefficient way to meet world protein demand.**

Beef is a particularly expensive resource to produce, requiring a 10:1 ratio of feed kg to product kg. Seafood, poultry, and pork also require many times their weight in feed to produce. These proteins represent inefficient ways to meet the nutritive needs of a growing global population. The recent surge in commodity prices exacerbates the impracticality of traditional forms of protein; other protein sources must be developed to meet world demand. Solae sees the solution as soy.

- **Soy is the ideal alternative—nutritionally efficient and readily available.**

The soybean provides a high-quality protein, comparable to that of meat, milk, fish, and eggs. Because soy includes all nine essential amino acids—in the right proportions and highly digestible forms—that humans need to grow and develop, soy is a “complete protein.”

Soy production is increasing faster than world population, which is expected to continue. Recent food technology advances allow for soy’s incorporation into numerous products. Solae, market leader in soy production, has a history of product innovation.

- **Soy can be an important tool for meeting the world’s food requirements and combating malnutrition.**

Malnutrition is the leading cause of child mortality and morbidity worldwide, accounting for 55% of cases. Soy can be part of the solution for developing nations attempting to alleviate the problems associated with hunger, malnourishment, and poverty. Improved child nutrition over time can lead to a better educated populace, enhanced human capital, greater national productivity, and economic prosperity.

▪ **Solae would like to explore innovative solutions to the problems of developing nations.**

Solae—in partnership with others—is helping Nigeria expand its school feeding program and desires to explore more such partnerships to meet the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations and secure brighter futures for developing nations.

“School feeding programs throughout Africa could benefit from the use of soy to improve nutrition.”

— Ken Holt

Jose Antonio Castillo—The World Food Programme Perspective

▪ **The WFP’s major problem is supplying food for all of its intervention programs in the face of high prices.**

As a major provider of food interventions serving vulnerable populations all over the world, WFP efforts are directly affected by high food prices. It lacks the resources to keep all of its current programs going worldwide. With oil prices also rising, the cost of transporting food has complicated the sourcing problem.

“We have less food, and we have less money to transport the food to the beneficiaries. . . . This is a real dilemma for us; how can we tackle this?”

— Jose Antonio Castillo

▪ **With hunger and malnutrition growing, WFP needs assistance more than ever.**

Food inflation is taking an enormous toll on a personal level. Households spending most of their income to buy food neglect other expenses such as healthcare. One billion people live on less than US\$1.00 per day. Measures the WFP is taking to combat the situation include:

- *Attempting to change U.S. policies* exacerbating food inflation.
- *Conducting household assistance assessments.* More accurate data will help the WFP determine which populations are most needy and target its responses appropriately.
- *Developing innovative cost-effective aid programs* (e.g., food for work, food for training, and cash and voucher).
- *Partnering* with governments, U.N. agencies, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and others to promote long-term solutions to developing nations’ problems.
- *Supporting small farmers and agricultural development* in communities that the WFP serves.
- *Soliciting donor support.* Cash resources are most needed to help the WFP cope with its short-term situation.

FNDE: Steps for Creating Sustainable School Feeding Programs

■ Speaker: **Daniel Balaban**, President, National Fund for Education Development (Brazil)

Overview

At the halfway point between the 2000 adoption of Millennium Development Goals and the 2015 target for accomplishing them, sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve any MDGs. Nearly half of the continent lives in extreme poverty, and even the best governed African nations have been unable to mitigate poverty. Yet the cost of chronic hunger—which cripples a nation economically—exceeds the cost of eliminating it.

What is required is a concerted and united effort, with external assistance initially and a well-planned strategy. The Strategy for Saving Lives encompasses ten key elements to ensure implementation of successful school nutrition programs.

Context

Mr. Balaban shared his view that sub-Saharan Africa needs help to eradicate extreme poverty and offered a ten-step plan for doing so that hinges on school feeding programs.

Key Points

- **Sub-Saharan nations must mount a concerted, united effort to alleviate pervasive extreme poverty.**

In September 2000, 191 countries signed the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Reaching the eight goals by 2015 would deliver more than 500 million people from extreme poverty, 300 million from starvation, and 30 million children from death before age five.

Now midway between MDG adoption in 2000 and the 2015 target, sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve any of the MDGs. The region's poverty rate is probably the world's highest, with 44% of the continent living on less than US\$1 per day in 2002. This represents 300 million people, 139 million more than in 1981 even though GDP has been growing rapidly for over one-third of these nations (averaging above 5%) since 1995. Even the best governed African nations have been unable to reduce levels of extreme poverty.

A large proportion of the African population—44%—is below the age of 14. These children and their nations hold enormous potential if access to health and education can be secured.

Brazil's National Fund for Educational Development and National School Feeding Programme propose that African governments, with support from the international community, work to implement comprehensive school feeding programs, using locally produced food for meals that include sufficient micronutrients.

- **School feeding programs can offer a way to mitigate poverty and its crippling effects on populations and nations.**

In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 23 million children routinely go to school hungry (59 million in developing countries worldwide). According to a World Food Programme study, US\$0.25 a day per student is enough to finance a healthy diet. This implies that a sum of US\$50.00 per student per 200-day school year—or US\$1.15 billion (the same as Brazil's federal school nutrition budget for 2008)—would be sufficient to solve the problem of Africa's 23 million chronically hungry students.

Childhood malnutrition and associated problems are likely robbing African nations of much more than \$1.15 billion in lost GDP per year. A 2007 U.N. study quantifying the costs of childhood malnutrition in Central America and the Dominican Republic ("The Cost of Hunger") illustrates the processes by which malnourishment and low school attendance hurt nations' productive capacity and economic growth.

"The cost of hunger is much more expensive than the cost of creating school feeding programs."

— Daniel Balaban

The Brazilian proposal is for each sub-Saharan country to create a school nutrition program with initial assistance (about US\$1 billion) from international aid organizations and private donors. Governments would sign an agreement to allocate a certain percentage of their income for program implementation, with this percentage rising each year.

Recommended percentages are 10% in the first year, 20% in the second year, and so on—as such a schedule would provide for complete autonomy in ten years. (If such levels are not feasible, it is nonetheless important to allocate *some* amount, so that a school nutrition program line item exists in the federal budget—a line item that probably will be expanded over time.) Such planning is necessary to demonstrate the government's commitment to working toward self-sufficient maintenance of the school feeding program without relying on external aid.

"We won't have failed to eradicate poverty if we didn't try to eradicate poverty with a united and serious plan. We believe the time is now!"

— Daniel Balaban

- **Mr. Balaban's "Strategy for Saving Lives" encompasses ten key elements.**

Mr. Balaban created a ten-step Strategy for Saving Lives to help developing nations implement successful school feeding programs as a way to combat the scourge of poverty. It reflects lessons learned from implementing Brazil's successful school nutrition program. The steps in summary:

1. *Commitment.* The publicly expressed commitment of national leadership is a fundamental prerequisite for school

nutrition programs' success. Leaders must make clear, unequivocal decisions to prioritize programs so that resources are allocated and viable, efficient, sustainable organizational structures are created.

2. *Diagnosis.* Comprehensive and systematic assessments of cultural, economic, societal, and logistical factors that bear upon proposed school feeding programs must inform objectives for programs to be effective.
3. *Guidelines and principles.* Establishment of programs' principles and guidelines should reflect political, economic, and social realities. For example, health education should reflect regional eating habits; programs should benefit local economies; structures should implement social controls; nutritional content of meals should address students' needs and pathologies.
4. *Strategy.* It is important to define a program's target audience and establish goals, timetables, and general and specific objectives.
5. *Institution of legal bases.* To assure the durability and stability of the program, it must be defined as a national policy, not a governmental one, with laws supporting it written into federal constitutions. Legislation should set out how the program's target audience will be identified and how resources will be allocated.

"Programs must be defined as national policy; not government policy."

— Daniel Balaban

6. *Respect for culture.* The program must respect the local culture's eating habits. It must be decentralized. Food traditions influence a people's daily habits and reveal local culture.
7. *Social control.* Involvement of all stakeholders—teachers, parents, and community activists—equitably, with decisions made by participative democracy, is the best way to ensure the social controls necessary for proper application of resources.
8. *Training.* The program must have a clear strategy for the training of cooks, nutritionists, school administrators, teachers, parents, and managers. Training should clarify standards and processes in order to maintain program controls and avoid waste of time and resources at all execution stages.
9. *Sustainability.* The goal is to create a sustainable program—with political support, state financing, and efficient design—that purchases local food products from small family farms. Entrepreneurial ventures should be ecologically correct, economically viable, socially fair, and culturally accepted.
10. *Permanent assessment processes.* Programs must continually be subject to assessments to clarify needed adjustments, so that what is working well may be improved upon and what is going wrong may be corrected. Each country must have the autonomy to develop its own programs and create evaluation procedures meeting its specific needs and goals.

Country Case Study: Joint Aid Management in Africa “Complete Community Assistance Through School Based Platforms”

■ Speaker: **Isak Pretorius**, Executive Director, Joint Aid Management

Overview

Joint Aid Management (JAM) is a humanitarian relief and development organization that applies business approaches to implementing sustainable development programs in Africa. Innovative sustainability strategies for each country include providing governments with food processing plants to make the nutritious food blends that stave off starvation. In such ways, JAM’s programs help nations meet their own needs.

JAM’s multifaceted approaches are designed to bring communities maximum benefit and give donors efficient means to accomplish their objectives. School feeding programs, in particular, offer a uniquely efficient way to meet multiple objectives through a single mechanism.

JAM’s mission is to achieve this vision in Africa through:

- Offering a professional, dignified solution to the poor.
- Helping to develop people through education and development programs.
- Meeting the nutritional and educational needs of children.
- Providing sustainable water and sanitation solutions.
- Meeting people’s needs in times of crises.
- Operating in accordance with Christian values and morals.
- Operating all aid activities on a fully inclusive basis, not discriminating on the basis of race, religion, gender, or political persuasion.

Context

Mr. Pretorius explained how the nonprofit aid organization founded by his father uses innovative sustainability development programs to help African nations help themselves.

Key Points

- **JAM takes a business approach to helping African nations help themselves via sustainable development programs.**

JAM is a faith-based, humanitarian relief and development organization, founded by a retired South African tobacco entrepreneur, that has been working on sustainable development programs in Africa for the past 23 years. The organization applies business approaches to all it does.

“The overarching theme of JAM is we take a business approach to what we do. . . . We’re in the business of helping people.”

— Isak Pretorius

Through innovative, targeted sustainable development programming, JAM provides African nations with a “hand-up” rather than a hand-out. The idea is that eventually the programs will be able to sustain themselves and will no longer require JAM’s involvement. Making itself obsolete would be JAM’s ultimate achievement.

“We dream of the day when we don’t have malnutrition clinics to run.”

— Isak Pretorius

JAM’s vision:

“To ‘help Africa help itself’ by contributing toward the alleviation of poverty through sustainable humanitarian programs, expressing the compassionate heart of God.”

- **JAM’s sustainable programs provide African nations with means for self-sustenance—a “hand-up.”**

Headquartered in South Africa and focused exclusively on the African continent, JAM is singularly positioned to address African development needs. It also operates in accordance with global standards, receives international funding, and is registered as a U.S. 501(c) 3 organization.

JAM’s distinct Complete Community Assistance programming approach focuses strongly on sustainability and on developing nations’ human capital and building infrastructures. Its programming is child-focused and encompasses activities in the following areas:

- *School feeding.* JAM reaches 479,000 children each day with a school meal and educational assistance in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are based on the WFP model. Commodities are tracked all along the supply chain, from origin to distribution.
- *Child nutrition.* Child nutrition interventions include therapeutic feeding centers to help chronically malnourished children regain health and programs providing orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) with take-home food rations.
- *Water and sanitation.* JAM helps meet the water and sanitation needs of communities without these services by digging in excess of 200 deep wells each year.
- *HIV/AIDS education.* JAM initiatives educate community representatives, teachers, and primary school-aged children about HIV/AIDS and provide nutritional support (“food prescriptions”) to people living with the disease.
- *Agricultural development.* School and backyard gardens as well as small farm development programs are the focus of JAM’s efforts to help communities expand their agricultural capacities.

“We truly believe [in] developing solutions for the continent that come out of the continent. It’s people from the continent of Africa who understand the dynamics we deal with and the challenges we face.”

— Isak Pretorius

▪ **Food processing factories—eventually to be run by governments—are a critical element of sustainability plans.**

JAM operates three food processing facilities—in Mozambique, Angola, and Sudan—that produce blended foods such as fortified corn-soya blends (and soon Plumpynut) with commodities supplied by donors. Use of donated commodities reduces production costs and increases the capabilities of nutritional programs.

Food processing factories form an important part of JAM’s sustainability plans for the countries it serves, because ultimately they will be turned over to the governments. The facilities will operate as nationally owned entities, supplying food for both nationally funded programs and the commercial market. In this way, the plants will provide nations with the capability to produce their own (vitaly needed) fortified blended foods for their own nutritional intervention programs.

▪ **JAM’s multifaceted approach means maximum impact for communities and efficient goal achievement for donors.**

JAM believes strongly in a multifaceted approach to helping Africa. This approach utilizes a consortia of NGOs and donors to achieve maximum impact within the communities served while providing donors with the most efficient mechanisms available to achieve their individual objectives.

Among JAM’s other strongly held convictions are the following:

- Those who would help Africa must target helping the continent’s nations help themselves, transitioning from hand-out to hand-up.
- To ensure long-term sustainability of a nation’s capacities, efforts must focus on developing national human capital.
- Education is one of the foundational blocks for building a nation’s long-term development and ultimate self-sufficiency.

▪ **School-based platforms offer a particularly efficient way to meet a multiplicity of vital objectives.**

JAM views school feeding programs as a unique opportunity to accomplish myriad objectives through a single mechanism. These objectives include changing community mindsets toward education, operating a complete community-assistance model efficiently, and investing in long-term community development. Moreover, at times of emergency, school feeding can reduce the shock and trauma experienced by displaced and/or orphaned school children.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for implementing sustainable school feeding programs, however. Models successful in one country may be applied in another, but there must be flexibility to contextualize models on a case-by-case basis.

“One size does not fit all. [Sustainable school feeding] looks very different in every country. . . . We need to be careful that the models we develop are flexible models.”

— Isak Pretorius

Some other lessons JAM has learned through its experience with school feeding programs:

- Infrastructure plays a huge role in the success of a school feeding program and must be developed at all levels. It is infrastructure that will attract the commercial investment necessary for economic development.

“Unless we invest in infrastructure, how do we create commercial involvement?”

— Isak Pretorius

- Beyond food, educational assistance—including but not limited to teacher training—is critical to ensuring the community’s long-term commitment to, and the success of, education.

“We must create a groundswell to activate community involvement.”

— Isak Pretorius

- Beneficiary targeting should be guided not solely by vulnerability or solely by geography but should represent a mixture of the two methods in order to achieve the greatest good.

Other Important Points

- **How JAM began.** JAM was started in 1984 by retired South African tobacco entrepreneur Peter Pretorius after he was stranded in Mozambique for ten days together with 34,000 starving people. Every day more than 30 people died, whom he helped bury. The reality of this suffering filled him with resolve to use his business acumen to help as many fellow Africans in need as possible.
- **Plumpywhat?** “Plumpynut” is a recently developed, revolutionary, ready-to-use-food (or RTUF)—a blend of peanut butter, vegetable oil, powdered milk, and powdered sugar, fortified with essential vitamins and minerals—that can rapidly restore health to malnourished people.

Country Case Study: Akshaya Patra . . . A Success Story

- Speakers: **Chanchalpathi Dasa**, Vice Chairman, Akshaya Patra Foundation
Madhu Sridhar, President, Akshaya Patra Foundation, USA

Overview

The largest—and certainly among the most successful—school feeding program in the world is operated in India by the Akshaya Patra Foundation. The organization is dedicated to helping India develop through education and to facilitating education by removing hunger. The innovative public-private partnership provides hot balanced midday meals, cooked fresh daily, to more than 940,000 students in 12 cities around the vast nation. How it logistically manages this feat is a testament to the power of human ingenuity and commitment.

Context

Mr. Das and Ms. Sridhar told the success story of Akshaya Patra—describing its history, mission, and methods that allow it to provide hot meals to nearly 1 million children per day.

Key Points

- **Akshaya Patra has ramped up its capacity to feed hot meals to India's school children at a staggering rate.**

About half of India's children were malnourished in 2000 when Akshaya Patra founders began a simple program of cooking hot, nutritious meals and bringing them around to a handful of schools in Bangalore. When the news spread, demand from other schools flooded into Akshaya Patra, and the founders began to work on the logistical problems of how to meet it.

The organization rapidly scaled up production. From feeding 1,500 students in five schools in Bangalore in 2000, capacity has grown steadily each year to the point where Akshaya Patra now serves hot, balanced meals—featuring regional fare and cooked fresh daily—to over 940,000 students in 12 cities in five states. This growth rate (called “staggering” in a Harvard Business School Case Study on the organization) is even more remarkable considering the geographic dispersion of the cities served.

Perpetually expanding scale is an organizational commitment: Akshaya Patra (which means “unlimited vessel”) now sets its sights on feeding hot midday meals to 1 million school children per day, expecting to accomplish that milestone by 2010. Akshaya Patra is an organization that never stops learning, improving, and extending its reach.

In 2001, Akshaya Patra's founders succeeded in convincing the Indian government to pass a law mandating that all of the nation's government-aided schools serve students cooked midday meals.

- **Akshaya Patra's vision is that no child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger.**

Akshaya Patra is “a good marriage” of missionaries and business people. Its advisors and trustees include (mostly Bangalore-based) entrepreneurs, executives, doctors, and government officials with interests in India's development. The organization operates in cooperation with state governments (which supply per-child funding) and the federal government (which supplies grain commodities)—exemplifying a successful public-private partnership. It also has the financial support of numerous corporate and other donors around the world.

Uniting these diverse stakeholders is an ambition to help educate India's youth for the development of the country. Akshaya Patra's vision statement:

“No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger.”

This is an ambitious vision given that 13.5 million children in India are out of school, spending their days doing menial jobs.

Akshaya Patra believes that education is the single most powerful way to pull a family out of the cycle of poverty, and that within a single generation education can significantly improve a family's quality of life. This will become even more the case as knowledge-based industries take center stage in emerging economies. A widely educated populace would be a real asset for India, propelling it into the ranks of developed countries.

“It is our dream to see India become a developed country. . . . With knowledge-based industries taking the center stage of the emerging societies, an educated populace is the real strength of a country.”

— Chanchalpathi Dasa

- **How an organization logistically is able to cook and distribute nearly 1 million meals a day is a marvel attesting to the power of human ingenuity and commitment.**

Curds, rice, and *sambar* (a vegetable soup) are staples of Akshaya Patra meals in South India. In the North tastes are different, and there Akshaya Patra prepares *chapattis* (bread), *dal* or *sabji* (curries), and *halva* (vegetable rice) for the children. The vegetables used change daily depending on what is most seasonally plentiful (therefore cheapest) in local markets—which also provides children with a more varied and balanced diet.

How the organization manages to cook balanced, hot meals fresh daily—with operations flexible enough to accommodate daily changes in ingredients and meal counts (provided by schools one day in advance)—for nearly 1 million children is a marvel, a testament to the power of human ingenuity and commitment.

A dual-pronged distribution strategy maximizes efficiency. A centralized hub-and-spoke model is used in the cities, and a decentralized model is used in villages, where local women are hired to cook food in small kitchens. (Centralized distribution would never work in rural India, given the long distances between villages and the nation's poor road infrastructure.)

The organization's Bangalore kitchen is the largest kitchen in the world, an engineering feat designed for the job of cooking 150,000 meals a day with speed and efficiency. Around 2:30 a.m. each school day, food ingredients begin to travel—minimally touched by human hands—from area to area, floor to floor. *Chapati*-making machines turn out 10,000 per hour. *Sambar* or *dal* is prepared for 6,000 students in two hours, rice for 1,000 in 15 minutes. Ingredients undergo various cooking and preparation treatments until they fall from shoots to combine into the complex dishes that typify Indian fare.

The cooking is finished by 10:00 a.m., when meals are packed and loaded into specially designed containers and trucks that keep them hot en route to schools. At the schools, drivers pick up next-day meal counts and other data the organization collects, which helps inform menu decisions and quality control efforts. In the kitchen, hoses spray hot water on all food surfaces, sanitizing them in preparation for the next day's activities.

Other Important Points

- **Quantifying the good.** Studies of the results of Akshaya Patra meals on schools' enrollment, attendance, and drop-out rates and students' nutrition show uniformly impressive before and after results. In Jaipur, 18% of students reported they would not have attended school if there were no meals.
- **Tap Akshaya Patra's expertise.** Akshaya Patra will share freely the engineering and operational expertise it has developed with others working on implementing school feeding programs around the world, and invites interested parties to tour its Bangalore kitchen.
- **Unlimited vessel.** The name "Akshaya Patra" comes from a myth about a magic bowl that provides a continual, never-ending supply of food. Indeed, school children are welcome to multiple helpings of Akshaya Patra's meals.
- **Stony response.** Akshaya Patra kitchens use specially designed machines to "de-stone" rice—removing the stones and foreign elements that suppliers routinely add to boost the weight of rice. One supplier who learned of the machine had the gall to ask Akshaya Patra for his stones back!

Status of School Feeding: Country Reports by Delegation Leaders

Overview

The delegates described widely divergent school feeding models in each country, contrasting in several aspects—including principles, strategies, objectives, legal and logistical frameworks, distribution structures, processes, and methods.

Yet many school meal programs were created for similar reasons. These included increasing children's access to education, improving their health, supporting local economies, strengthening communities, and advancing national objectives—such as alleviating poverty, increasing standards of living, and achieving Millennium Development Goals.

In cases where meal programs' effectiveness was documented, nearly all were shown to dramatically improve school attendance, enrollment, drop-out rates, and academic performance as well as reduce the incidence of malnutrition and related conditions. Other benefits documented included reduced unemployment in local communities and stronger community involvement in schools.

Context

Delegates from nine countries presented an overview of the school feeding programs in their homelands, explaining how programs are structured and implemented, the particular challenges they face, and the successes they've enjoyed.

Bolivia

- **A legal framework supports Bolivia's national school feeding program.**

In Bolivia municipalities are required to provide school meals at the initial and primary levels; several school feeding laws establish guidelines and rules for their doing so. Coverage is universal in Bolivia, where the government views access to food as a human right.

- **Administration is decentralized, handled by municipalities.**

With decentralized administration by municipalities, there is no menu pattern—regional foods are served, locally sourced. Funding comes from the municipalities, with support from international aid organizations. Incentives encourage municipalities to work jointly to administer their programs. In cities only breakfast is served; in mountainous areas where children walk for hours to and from school, they receive both breakfast and lunch. Active community participation is typical, particularly in rural areas, where families often contribute cash or other resources.

- **Control is centralized, with the program overseen by a national, multi-ministry council.**

Bolivia believes that a multi-sectoral, integrated approach to school feeding is imperative so that the program achieves a

broad set of objectives. Accordingly, its National Council for School Feeding includes representatives from numerous ministries, each with different roles and goals.

The Ministry of Education and Culture focuses on improving enrollment and is responsible for the information systems that monitor the program to ensure standards are upheld. The Ministry of Health and Sport targets reducing malnutrition and improving student health. Stimulating local economies is the interest of the Ministry of Production and Microenterprises, while the objective of the Ministry of Agriculture is to increase Bolivia's food production. The Ministry of Justice seeks to ensure protection of children's rights to education and food.

"Each ministry has a specific role and contribution, so the focus is wide; not narrow."

— Winston Fausto Canqui Aramayo

- **With so many different stakeholders, the program must have a clear and simple vision.**

Given the complexities of administering and controlling a regionally diverse school feeding program that serves a broad set of national objectives in a geographically diverse country, it is essential that everyone involved recognizes the same core vision. Accordingly, the School Feeding Law reflects three fundamental, well-understood principles:

- Access to food is a human right.
- Provision of school feeding is mandatory at the initial and primary levels.
- The school meal program must respect traditional eating habits.

- **The Bolivian experience highlights critical elements a school feeding program needs to succeed.**

To create a successful school feeding program, it is of utmost importance to:

- Universalize the service at least for the initial and primary school levels.
 - Set clear standards that establish norms for the provision of school feeding.
 - Create an effective and decentralized monitoring and evaluation system, including nutritional surveillance.
 - Develop a process to promote consumption of local food products, to stimulate local economic development.
 - Establish monitoring mechanisms at all levels.
-

Guatemala

- **Nearly half (49.3%) of Guatemala's 12.9 million people are chronically undernourished.**

This is the highest rate among Latin American countries and fourth highest in the world. 51% of Guatemalans live in poverty, 15% in extreme poverty.

- **The nation has a school feeding program, but it is far from ideal.**

The U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP) is the nation's front line against hunger. After 25 years of assistance in Guatemala, however, in 2009 the WFP will cease intervention to schools covered by the national school feeding program (70% of schools). The WFP will continue to assist uncovered schools and provide technical support to strengthen the national school feeding program.

The national school feeding program—which benefits about 2.2 million preschool and elementary school children—has been implemented in different ways over the decades by different government administrations. WFP sees both positives and negatives in the current implementation system and is working with the new government (in power since January 2008) to assess its strengths and weaknesses.

The program involves centralized distribution of fortified cookies and milk and a money transfer system that provides school boards with federal funds to plan menus and purchase foods locally. This system has survived three government changes and is preferred by local stakeholders—both positive aspects. Having each school purchase food at local markets is also a plus in that it supports local economies, means few storage or time constraints, and empowers communities.

Typically, the daily meal is a mid-morning snack of a sweetened porridge-like drink (*atole*) and bread. Although sufficiently varied foods are available in markets, only rarely is this simple menu supplemented with other foods like fruits and vegetables. Accordingly, the menu is not nutritionally adequate week in and week out. The national program offers no nutritional or menu guidelines.

- **The national school feeding program is primarily a financial system.**

The system's main strength lies in its financial processes; training of school personnel focuses on financial management. As primarily a financial system, however, the program lacks a logical framework with stated objectives, results targets, or measurement/evaluation processes. Moreover, money transfers are often delayed for months at the start of a new school year owing to cumbersome processes for determining schools' entitled amounts.

"In Guatemala, school feeding is just a money transfer system; not a practical infrastructure."
— Willem Van Milink

- **The WFP has operational recommendations as it phases out intervention to Guatemalan schools covered by the program.**

To strengthen the money transfer system, the WFP would like to see Guatemala's Ministry of Education move the beginning of the school calendar to mid-February from January or use program funds from the last quarter of the prior year for the first quarter of the new school year. Other suggestions for the government to consider:

- Extend the program to include preschools and *all* elementary schools.
- Standardize implementation modalities and transfer amounts.
- Guarantee timely money transfers.
- Design a program framework with objectives, result targets, and measurement/evaluation.
- Provide schools with standardized technical assistance and practical guidelines for food purchase and preparation.
- Set objectives regarding United Nations Millennium Development Goals, such as universal primary school education (only 65% of children complete grade 6).
- Implement measures to strengthen community participation and control, further promote local economies, institute food purchase control mechanisms, and avoid exclusion of foods meeting defined quality and nutritional requirements.
- Create an essential package of complementary interventions addressing food safety, health/de-worming, fuel-saving stoves, HIV/AIDS education, hygiene education, clean drinking water and latrines, gardens, canteens, and take-home food rations.

Jordan

- **Jordan's highly structured school feeding program meets the nutritional needs of children in less privileged areas.**

In 1999 Jordan's Ministry of Education (with help from the Ministry of Planning) adopted the "School Feeding Project." The pilot program initially served 10,000 students in grades 1-3 in 127 schools located in the country's most disadvantaged areas. Based on positive documented effects on student health, coverage has been expanded in multi-year phases, both geographically and by grade (up to grade 6). In the 2008-2009 school year, the program will serve 410,000 students in 2,200 schools.

The structured program involves centralized distribution to schools—by the Jordanian Armed Forces—of a standardized meal: flavored milk; high-protein biscuits fortified with vitamins A and D, folic acid, and zinc; and a mid-sized piece of fruit.

School staff must observe strict meal-handling procedures. Designated people clean the fruit; teachers check meals' integrity before distributing them 15 minutes before the third period's end. Students may turn down food they do not desire, but school staff is forbidden from taking any meal component. Strict procedures also govern waste disposal as well as food storage.

▪ **Project objectives focus on health and education benefits.**

The project's goals and objectives include:

- To improve the feeding and health of school children in less privileged areas.
- To cultivate healthy eating habits and attitudes toward nutrition that will last a lifetime.
- To ensure a quality education process and enhance education system interactions.
- To reduce the drop-out rate.
- To strengthen collaboration among the family, school, and local community.
- To achieve the promise inherent in the Jordanian government's slogan, "Partners in Education."

▪ **Much success has been documented.**

Two studies—conducted in 2000 and 2006—document the program's successes in numerous areas, including:

- Lowered absenteeism and drop-out rates.
- Fewer health problems (including anemia and vitamin deficiencies) among students.
- Greater classroom efficiency and participation.
- Improved student attitudes toward health and nutrition issues.
- Reduced unemployment in covered communities.
- Lower financial burden on families (as fewer students purchased lunch at school).

The project has faced and overcome some logistical challenges and is still working on others. But these are relatively minor issues (for example, maintaining consistency in the size of meals' fruit). In general, the successful program is viewed as an asset to Jordan, supported at the highest levels.

"The government of Jordan is very committed to sustaining and continuing to implement this program—not only the government but also the King."

— Mohammed Jum'a Okour

Malawi

▪ **The poor health of Malawi's malnourished children is impairing the nation's ability to educate its youth.**

The health and nutrition of school-aged children has been largely neglected in Malawi, where interventions to date have focused on health/nutrition for children under age five and pregnant women. But the government of Malawi is starting to scale up efforts to improve the health of school children, realizing that students' ability to absorb lessons depends on satisfaction of their health and nutrition needs. Poor health and nutrition are boosting absenteeism, grade repetition, and drop-out rates in Malawi.

▪ **Some schools benefit from food programs, but these are in the minority.**

School feeding programs in 869 schools (only 16% of Malawi's 5,307) are run by foreign aid organizations, primarily the World Food Programme and Mary's Meals.

Additionally, a government School Health and Nutrition (SHN) program provides students in fewer than 20% of schools (969) with a corn/soy blend porridge daily, as well as take-home rations to girls and orphaned boys who have achieved 80% attendance records. Community volunteers are actively involved in cooking, building kitchens, guarding and distributing food, and collecting firewood. Numerous government ministries in addition to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology are involved in the program. These different partners are interested in different aspects of the SHN package. As a result, few schools implement the entire program.

The SHN program has dramatically improved the lives of students in covered schools—increasing enrollment, attendance, and academic performance; decreasing early girl marriages; and reducing gender disparities in drop-out rates.

▪ **Malawi is committed to expanding the reach of its school health and nutrition program.**

By 2015, Malawi aspires to be a nation where healthy, well-nourished school-aged children can achieve their optimum potential (in accordance with its Millennial Development Goals). To that end, a three-pronged strategy is directed at expanding and improving the nation's SHN program. The strategy for making the SHN program an integral, sustainable part of the education system involves:

- Building the capacity of the Ministry of Education and other relevant ministries to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate a national SHN program.
- Increasing the coordination of SHN interventions through partnerships among relevant government ministries, development partners, and civil society.
- Ensuring effective delivery of a package of SHN services.

To support this strategy, the government has developed a National Nutrition Policy as well as created a Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS to develop and implement nutrition- and AIDS-related programs.

▪ **The challenges are formidable but surmountable.**

The challenges of expanding the reach of Malawi's school feeding program to serve more children include:

- The government lacks the funds to roll out the SHN program to all public primary schools.
- A poor road network impedes sourcing and poses logistical difficulties.
- Coordination and enforcement of monitoring processes are difficult with a diversity of implementation partners.

Firm in the belief that improving the health and nutrition of school children is vital to the sustainable development of Malawi, and of

Africa as a whole, the government of Malawi is determined to overcome these challenges.

“Our challenges are doable ones; we will accomplish our goals.”

— Charles F. Mazinga

Mexico

- **Mexico’s school breakfast program needs to change.**

The government agency that oversees Mexico’s 80-year-old school breakfast program—*el Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia* (DIF)—has been under attack. Recent bad press alleges that the school breakfast program causes obesity, duplicates actions, and should disappear. Indeed, Mexico has the fastest-growing childhood obesity rate in the world, and ironically the obesity co-exists with chronic under-nutrition, stunting, and micronutrient deficiencies (sometimes in the same individual) typical of developing nations. While studies of the breakfast program’s effects on obesity have shown no evidence that it escalates the risk factors for obesity and childhood disease, menus featuring sweetened cereal, pudding, cookies, and flavored milk clearly are not nutritionally balanced.

- **Yet the agency that oversees the program lacks the power to revamp the longstanding, societally entrenched system.**

DIF oversees numerous social services besides the breakfast program (e.g., related to drug addiction, migration, child care, community development, and legal counseling) and coordinates the breakfast program but does not operate it. The 80-year-old breakfast program is a fixture in Mexican society and practically runs itself. Each local SEDIF attends to the needs of its region, including school breakfast administration. The SEDIF is a network of networks, engrained into Mexican society. No other Mexican institution has roots or traditions that run so deep.

The federal government supplies funds directly to states, but how states spend the money is not always transparent or verifiable. The only quantification that states supply to DIF concerns the number of meals served. Feeding programs are directed to the most vulnerable public school students; 6 million of Mexico’s 26 million primary school children are beneficiaries. DIF has no resources to conduct impact studies to help assess the program’s value.

- **A small group at DIF is hoping to effect change despite the obstacles.**

A group of ten individuals is working on the challenges immediately before them in the effort to promote a healthy diet among school children. They have been evaluating whether the breakfast program should continue and in what form to best meet the needs of Mexican children and families, as well as working to define the most vulnerable populations to target. They would like to see a breakfast program with expanded objectives that:

- Promotes the importance of a healthy diet and a hot, nutritiously balanced breakfast.

- Focuses on quality, not only quantity, of food.

- Is the backbone of an education strategy encompassing health, food security, gender, culture, and community development.

The group has made progress sensitizing government officials to the need for changes in program objectives and menus. They have won buy-in for the idea that breakfast menus must be healthier (including fruit, whole grains, and unflavored milk) and are advancing the idea of hot breakfasts featuring Mexican staples such as *tortillas* that would boost demand for local products and stimulate community economic development.

“This is a window of opportunity for DIF to implement actions that lead to interventions and changes in the areas of health, nutrition, and community development.”

— Ernestina Polo-Oteyza

Mozambique

- **Mozambique’s struggles include high rates of malnutrition, food insecurity, and HIV/AIDS.**

Mozambique is a relatively young nation (33 years old) that has been at war for roughly half of its short life (or 16 years). The Portuguese-speaking country is surrounded by English-speaking neighbors (Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland). Like them, Mozambique struggles with high rates of chronic malnutrition (41%), food insecurity (38%), and HIV/AIDS (16% of the population tests positive; 30%-40% in some areas). The high commodity price situation is bound to exacerbate these problems.

- **A vision for alleviating the population’s problems focuses on boosting the role schools play in the betterment of communities.**

The nation’s network of schools numbers 11,519; nearly all are primary schools (11,145), with about 4 million students. The Ministry of Education and Culture and its development partners (including Joint Aid Management) see an opportunity for schools to play a vital role in helping alleviate the population’s travails and promoting the nation’s development.

The vision focuses on the integration of school and community and the dynamic role schools can play in promoting community self-sustenance. Three pillars of beliefs represent the foundation of this vision:

- *Educational theory must be connected to practical implementation.* Learning can only be effective if it brings together these two aspects.

- *Studies must be integrated with productive work.* What is being taught needs to have productive application. This is fundamental for education’s contribution to the economic, social, and cultural development of the country.

- *School must be integrally connected with the community life.* In this vision, the school participates dynamically in the community’s economic, social, and cultural development and

the community contributes to the school by helping to meet its various needs.

- **The school feeding program requires a holistic and forward-looking approach promoting Mozambique's self-sufficiency.**

The school feeding program in Mozambique has been in existence for 30 years. A joint effort of the government and its development partners, the school feeding intervention program reaches 469 of the nation's most disadvantaged schools (representing 302,389 students). Parents often participate in implementation (food delivery, etc.).

Fundamental to this program are two beliefs:

- A holistic approach to school feeding is necessary; it should be viewed in the context of all the other factors influencing students' academic productivity. These include issues of health, environment, and infrastructure conditions. Many schools have no buildings—the children study outside—and more than 70% of Mozambique's schools lack water.
- Every effort to sustain the program must help empower the nation to develop self-sustenance capabilities. Mozambique's experience of "extending hands" must end. The nation must develop the capabilities to feed its population. The school feeding program can be part of the solution to the nation's self-sustenance challenge.

"We want to receive, besides fish, the support we need to learn how to fish. . . . This is the challenge."

— Eurico Banze

South Africa

- **South Africa's school meal program was founded on the belief that education and nutrition are children's rights.**

In 1994, ex-President Nelson Mandela initiated the National School Nutrition Program (NSNP). The aim of the program is to enhance the educational experience of needy primary school children by promoting school attendance, improving concentration, and alleviating hunger. In 2002, authority over the program was transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Education.

In addition to school feeding, the program's key objectives include fostering sustainable food production via school gardens and agricultural education and providing nutrition education to promote the maintenance of healthy lifestyles.

- **A legal framework ensures that the neediest children receive nutritionally sound meals every school day.**

Laws stipulate that the NSNP covers public primary school students in grades R (like preschool) through 7 from the nation's poorest communities. Minimum feeding requirements necessitate that learners be fed on all 198 days of the school year. In the poorest communities, 100% of students have access to meals. In the 2007/08 school year, more than 6 million learners in 18,000 schools received NSNP meals.

Regulations also stipulate meal timing (before 10:00 a.m.) and dictate precise menus. Menu options are limited to several menus developed by the Department of Health, all providing 20%-30% of daily allowances of vitamins and minerals. Additionally, school gardens must be established and/or supported, promoting sustainable food production.

- **Funding is through government grants, on which strict conditions are imposed.**

The program is funded from the National Treasury, with the poorest communities (ranked in quintiles) receiving the most funds. Funding takes the form of "conditional grants"—allowing the government leeway to impose conditions on the use of funds. For example, 93% of costs must go to the meal itself, with the remaining 7% for administration.

To receive the grants, Provincial Departments of Education submit business plans annually to the national Department of Education; no business plans that fail to meet the conditions are accepted. Plans must be received before money transfers take place. Food items are sourced from the private sector, either small entrepreneurs or local cooperatives. Procurement processes are stipulated by federal law.

"Funding is very transparent . . . a critical element is to ensure that funds are used appropriately."

— Neo Rakwena

- **South Africa is considering expanding the successful school meal program to secondary schools.**

A government commission has conducted a feasibility study to assess the prospect of extending the program to secondary schools, and the government is assessing the provinces' state of readiness in terms of capacity, infrastructure, and advocacy. Expansion looks possible as early as April 2009.

Uganda

- **As a refugee-host country, Uganda has more immediate priorities for its school feeding program than most nations.**

Refugees not only face the problems of extreme poverty but have suffered the societal disruptions and emotional traumas of war. An HIV/AIDS epidemic, socio-cultural practices, hunger, and malnutrition all contribute to children's poor cognitive performance. With such problems in Uganda, its school feeding serves a purpose beyond those of most countries; the program was founded as a social protection mechanism.

In the food-insecure Karamoja region, the school feeding program requires special measures to keep the nomadic population's children in school (boarding schools, secondary-level school feeding).

- **Program aims: to improve the quality of life and cognitive performance of disadvantaged children of war.**

The aims of Uganda's school feeding program are to improve the quality of life and cognitive performance of primary (and in Karamoja secondary as well) school children living in disadvantaged, conflict-ridden, or post-conflict areas of Uganda.

To these ends, objectives include reducing short-term hunger, improving school attendance, lowering drop-out rates (especially for girls), and improving the health of students through access to safe water and education in life skills and reproductive health issues.

The program's primary beneficiaries are children displaced by current or past conflict, with low rates of literacy and school attendance, high food insecurity, poor health, and/or living in poverty. Secondary beneficiaries include school support staff and (in some districts) teachers, food-producing farmers, private-sector food processors and their employees, and commercial food transportation and storage providers.

▪ **School Feeding Programs (SFP) implementation is decentralized.**

Implementation is facilitated by local Food Management Committees and a teacher-designated Food Focal Person; partner organizations help with food distribution and frequently supply complementary resources. SFP meals consist of a lunch-time food basket of pulses and corn meal and a mid-morning snack of corn-soya blend. In Karamoja, girls who achieve 80% attendance also receive a take-home ration. A 2004 study of the program's impact in Karamoja showed markedly improved school attendance and enrollment rates.

▪ **Program funding depends upon donor support—and is a constant challenge.**

Donors work in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sports—the leading policy-setter and the agency that determines program design and monitoring and evaluation.

One reason that getting enough funding is often difficult is that donors see more pressing needs in Uganda than the school feeding program. Moreover, Uganda's own policies can stand in the way of gaining funding as well (e.g., the policy that feeding is a parental responsibility impedes delivery of a consistent message when making a funding case), as can politicization and misconceptions of certain issues and lack of consensus on approaches.

"We sit at the same table with the donors, our development partners, and agree on priorities together. . . . They say, 'Before we feed, we must first create conditions for education to take place'—that is the argument they put forth."
— Aggrey David Kibenge

The way forward involves:

- Continued stakeholder dialogue on the division of labor among government, parents, and donors.
- Decentralization of financial management to the school level, to allow for more flexibility in spending prioritization.
- Continued advocacy for home-grown school feeding programs as more sustainable approaches (a HGSP measure was defeated in 2004).

Zambia

▪ **Zambia is the African nation hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.**

Zambia's school feeding program is a Ministry of Education initiative run with support from the World Food Programme and created to facilitate education by alleviating its biggest barrier: the fact that hungry children in drought-prone and food-insecure districts were not displaying favorable education outcomes. The program's primary goal is to increase access to education and advance Zambia's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.

▪ **The school feeding program targets districts with the heaviest concentration of orphans and vulnerable children.**

The program reaches 137,000 children in 703 schools in 9 districts—just a fraction of Zambia's children—where food insecurity is high (often areas affected by drought), educational indicators are low, and HIV/AIDS has made OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children) commonplace. Children receive daily meals as well as monthly take-home rations.

The program has achieved dramatic increases in enrollment and attendance in assisted schools as well as improved community interest in the welfare of children through participation in school-based production activities.

▪ **As in Uganda, the proportions of Zambia's problems result in uncustomary objectives for the school feeding program.**

In addition to the goals of school feeding efforts in many countries—increasing enrollment and attendance, improving attention spans and learning capacities, improving the health and nutrition of school children, and incorporating public health initiatives like de-worming—Zambia's program aims also to:

- Encourage/enable families to host OVCs.
- Improve the HIV/AIDS-related knowledge of OVCs' families and institutions.
- Stimulate parents' participation in education, encouraging them to undertake and initiate activities to sustain school feeding after the World Food Programme exits.

▪ **Community involvement is an asset of Zambia's school feeding program—a much-needed one.**

Orientation and sensitization of the community to the importance of school feeding are viewed as key. In some schools community members have built kitchens and feeding areas; parent volunteers routinely help to serve meals, teach hygiene, and administer health treatments.

Community involvement and the work of other program partners (both NGOs and private-sector corporations) will be particularly critical to the SFP's survival after the World Food Programme withdraws its support—which is expected to happen in the near term.

▪ **The future is uncharted territory.**

The way forward, believes the Ministry of Education, lies in expansion of the program to new areas of the country, more

partnerships and synergistic alliances, and implementation of the home-grown school feeding concept (for which a strategy is being piloted).

However, the obstacles in the path of these activities are daunting—including poor program infrastructure, lack of the coordination mechanisms needed for effective partnerships, fragmentation and duplication of efforts, resource limitations, the nation's widespread poverty, and absence of any feasible plan

for sustaining the program after the World Food Programme's phase-out.

"Our only hope is a home-grown school feeding program; it's our only roadmap to self-sustenance."
— Royda Nkhata

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