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Annual Session**

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## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

**Agenda item 7**

*For consideration*

# **E**

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## **SUMMARY REPORT OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION OF WFP SUPPORT TO SCHOOL FEEDING IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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\* Office of Evaluation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the fourth school feeding impact evaluation commissioned by the Office of Evaluation. It provides evidence concerning the relevance and effectiveness of school feeding during instability, with a view to supporting programme design and informing school feeding policy. The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach, reviewing existing documents and using complementary quantitative and qualitative tools for data collection. However, fieldwork was interrupted by political instability in Côte d'Ivoire from September 2010. It could not be completed with the scope and rigour originally planned.

With its policy of “one school, one canteen”, the national school feeding programme in Côte d'Ivoire is an early example of a truly nationally owned programme, embedded in national education sector plans. A school feeding sustainability strategy exists, centred on a home-grown model, which WFP has supported throughout its evolution.

Following division of the country in 2002, the regular school feeding programme, implemented by the Government with WFP support, was confined to schools in the south. In the Central North West zone under the control of rebel forces, WFP included school feeding in two successive nationwide emergency operations, aimed at protecting human and productive assets while political and security solutions to the crisis were being sought. This dual arrangement continued under two successive nationwide protracted relief and recovery operations from 2005 to 2009, aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis.

The evaluation found that WFP's programme as originally designed was relevant and appropriate to the needs at the time. However, as instability continued, the instruments available to WFP and the relationship between WFP and the National School Feeding Directorate no longer supported the expected education and gender outcomes or safety net benefits. Potential nutrition impacts – which were not explicitly intended – could not be measured.

Although WFP operations provided meals to a very large number of children in rebel-controlled areas and the south, the total number and regularity of meal days were insufficient to stimulate school enrolment, attendance and completion. The evaluation found no differences in enrolment and achievement rates between treatment and non-treatment groups in either zone. In addition, girls continued to lag behind boys in completion of primary school. There was only weak evidence that the school meal conferred significant advantage to households as a value transfer, particularly to the most vulnerable households.

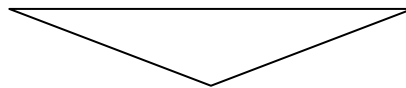
External factors caused by the protracted conflict and outside WFP's control also significantly undermined results by increasing vulnerability levels, thereby reducing households' ability to educate their children. This applied particularly to the most vulnerable households, whose incomes are now significantly lower than their less vulnerable counterparts. Some households saw the restarting of the school feeding programme as an indication that normalcy was returning, but the unpredictability of the school meals undermined the cost–benefit trade-off of sending children to school.

Faced with decreased funding and increased demand after 2007, WFP's concurrence with the Government's decision to serve the same number of schools with less food – rather than serving fewer schools – also had a negative effect on results.

In conclusion, WFP's commitment to supporting the Government's sustainability strategy until the school feeding programme reached self-sufficiency was strongly justified prior to the crisis. However, it did not fully serve WFP's education, gender and safety net objectives when the Government no longer had control of 60 percent of the country and 40 percent of the population over an extended period.

The evaluation makes ten recommendations for refocusing WFP's support where it is most needed, using the modalities that are most appropriate for WFP's current policy objectives, and matching the programme coverage with the available resources so that regular school feeding can be assured.

## DRAFT DECISION\*



The Board takes note of “Summary Report of the Impact Evaluation of WFP Support to School Feeding in Côte d’Ivoire” (WFP/EB.A/2011/7-C) and the management response (WFP/EB.A/2011/7-C/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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## BACKGROUND

### Evaluation Features

1. This is the fourth in a series of mixed-method impact evaluations of school feeding commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation and serving both accountability and learning purposes. The objectives of this evaluation are to:
  - i) evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of school feeding in an unstable environment;
  - ii) evaluate outcomes and impacts achieved in relation to WFP's new vision of school feeding as a social safety net;
  - iii) identify changes needed to increase the relevance and effectiveness of school feeding in unstable environments.
2. Since 2002, Côte d'Ivoire has been divided into two zones, the Government-controlled south and the Central North West zone (CNO) of the country, where former Forces Nouvelles rebels were based (see map in the Annex). The evaluation was designed to assess impact in both zones.
3. The mixed-methods approach included a review of existing literature and data, and surveys among a representative sample of 1,260 randomly selected households, using a two-stage sampling process. Half the households were in 30 communities, also randomly selected, in catchment areas supported by WFP school feeding operations – the “treatment communities”; and half were in 30 communities in the same districts but in catchment areas that did not have a school canteen at all – the “non-treatment communities”. Comparison between treatment and non-treatment communities facilitated the attribution of results to the programme.
4. Fieldwork for the evaluation was interrupted by the sudden announcement of elections in Côte d'Ivoire and the political crisis that followed. Planned interviews and focus groups at the school level and with a wide range of stakeholders had to be replaced by telephone interviews, which significantly limited the scope and rigour of the evaluation compared with the original design.
5. The major unit of analysis for assessing impact was the household. Data were analysed in two ways: i) comparison between treatment and non-treatment communities within a single zone – the south or the CNO; and ii) comparison between household responses in the treatment and non-treatment areas in both zones. In addition, the evaluation grouped the households according to their level of vulnerability and determined whether impacts differed by vulnerability group.

### Country Context

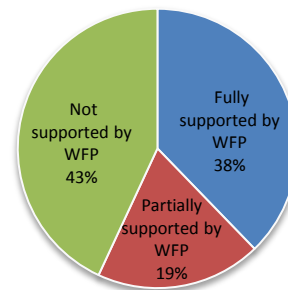
6. For three decades after independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire was one of the most prosperous countries in the region, with correspondingly high indicators of human development. By 2009, however, it ranked 163<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries in the human development index. According to the Government's 2008 Living Standards Survey, the proportion of the population classified as poor increased from 38.4 percent in 2002 to 50 percent in 2007.

7. Throughout the period covered by this evaluation, there were almost constant upheavals in the socio-political environment somewhere in Côte d'Ivoire. This is reflected in the number of primary schools functioning throughout the country, which dropped from 8,975 in 2001, to 5,784 in 2003. In the 2006/07 school year, renewed optimism for peace led to an increase, to 9,106, and by 2009/10 a total of 10,009 schools were operating. In the run-up to the 2010 election and during the ensuing crisis, however, schools were not open.

### WFP Support to the School Feeding Programme (1999/2000 to 2009/2010)

8. From 1998 to 2002, WFP assistance to education was part of the national plan for development of the education sector<sup>1</sup> and the Government's school feeding sustainability programme,<sup>2</sup> which is an early model of a home-grown school feeding programme. Managed by the National School Feeding Directorate (DNCS) in the Ministry of Education and following the policy of "one school, one canteen", this programme provides for the gradual hand-over of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) management to communities, through village committees. Following the crisis in September 2002, the regular SFP implemented by the DNCS with WFP support was restricted to schools in the south. To complement this, WFP included school feeding in two successive nationwide emergency operations, aimed at protecting human and productive assets while political and security solutions to the crisis were being sought. In the CNO, these were implemented by WFP with non-governmental organization (NGO) partners. This dual arrangement continued under two successive nationwide protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) from 2005 to 2009, aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis. Figure 2 presents a timeline of major external events and modifications in WFP operations over the last ten years.
9. Across the two zones, between 70 and 90 percent of schools participating in the SFP received WFP assistance. In academic year 2009/10, slightly more than 50 percent of all schools in the country were participating in the SFP. Figure 3 shows the value of WFP contributions to Côte d'Ivoire from 2001 to 2009, but the percentage devoted to school feeding is not recorded.
10. In 2009, the school feeding sustainability programme was again prioritized in a new WFP development project (107590). There are currently 229 home-grown school feeding groups country-wide, although fewer than 5 percent of school canteens have achieved 100 percent self-sufficiency.

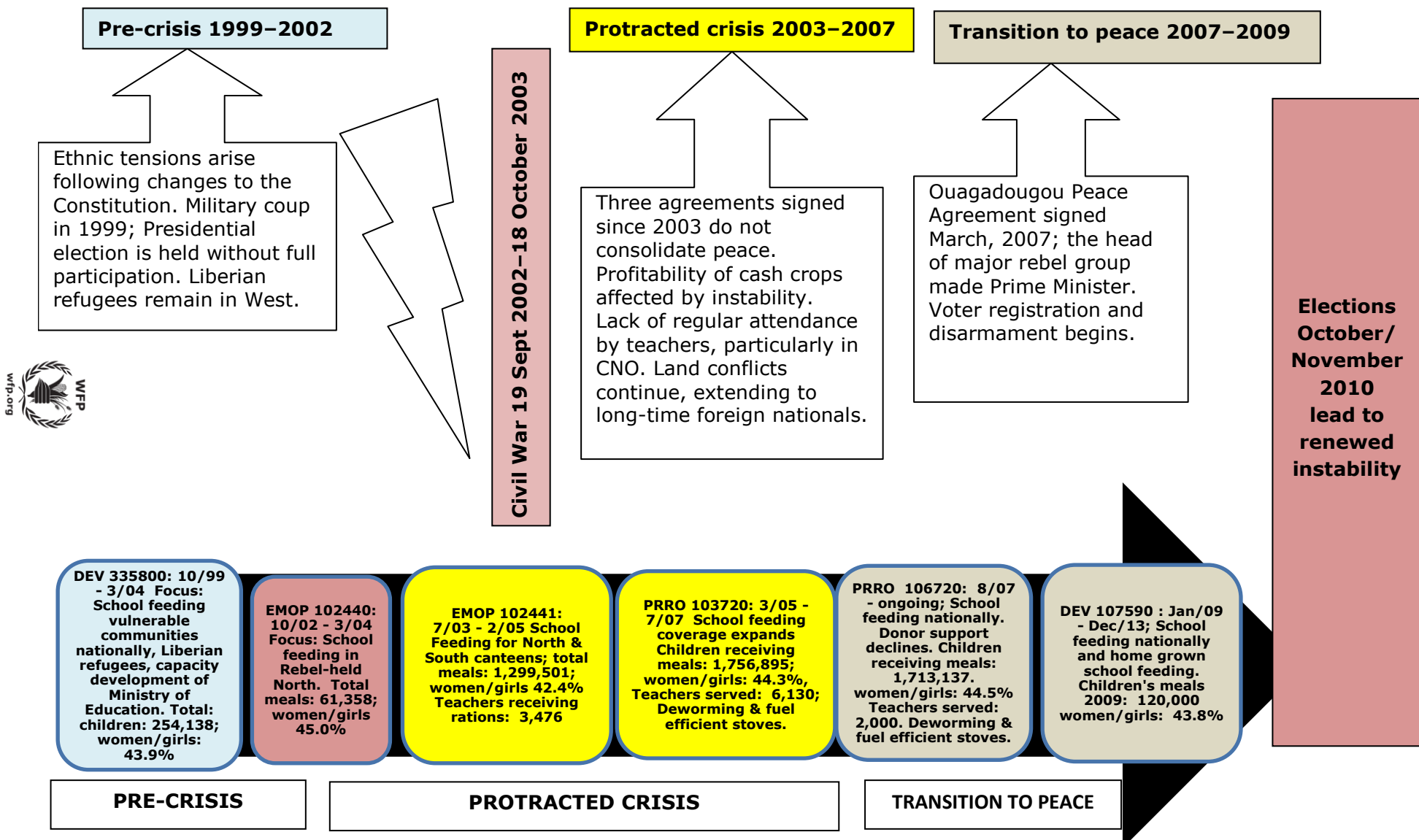
Figure 1 Percentage of School Canteens Supported by WFP



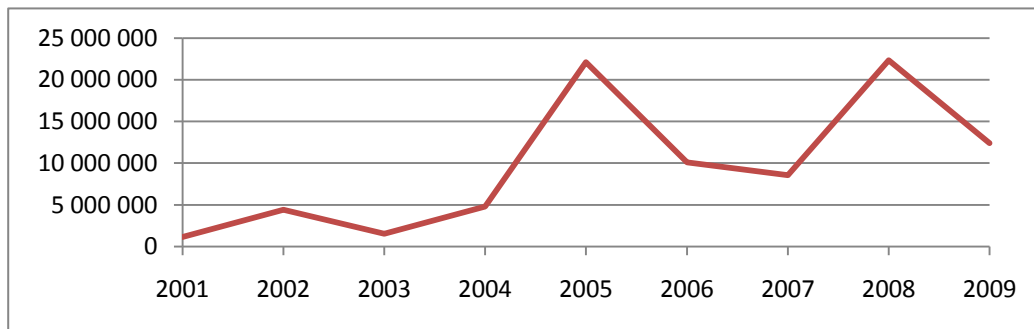
<sup>1</sup> Government of Côte d'Ivoire. 1998. Plan National de Développement du secteur Education/Formation. Abidjan.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Integrated Programme for Sustainable School Feeding (*Programme Intégré de Pérenisation des Cantines Scolaires*). Abidjan.

**Figure 2: Timeline of Key Events and WFP Operations 1999–2010**



**Figure 3: WFP Contributions to Côte d'Ivoire 2001–2009 (US\$)**



11. Since the 1980s, a core element of the school feeding sustainability strategy has been to charge students for school meals, at the rate of 25 CFA francs (now worth about US\$0.05) per meal. School management committees have been mandated to find ways for children from the most vulnerable households to continue participating.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS OF SCHOOL FEEDING

### Education and Learning

12. According to United Nations data, from 2003 to 2009 primary school enrolments fell nationally, from 92 to 81 percent for boys and from 70 to 64 percent for girls. The evaluation found no statistically significant differences in enrolment between households in treatment and non-treatment communities in either the south or the CNO. When disaggregated into three vulnerability classes, however, household-level data revealed that approximately 17 percent of primary school-age children from the most vulnerable households had never enrolled, compared with 11 percent from the least vulnerable households. Again, there was no statistically significant difference between households in treatment and non-treatment areas.
13. World Bank education statistics for the evaluation period indicate very low completion rates, ranging from 41 percent in 1999 to 46 percent in 2009. Completion rates for girls remained at two thirds of the rates for boys throughout the period. Drop-out rates continued to be an unacceptably high 20 percent.
14. Household-level data collected by the evaluation found that children's pass rates declined significantly at key points in the education cycle: at the age when a child can take responsibility at home, and at the age when parents consider a child to have completed sufficient education. Children reached these critical points at younger ages in the CNO than in the south, but there was no difference between treatment and non-treatment groups.
15. On average, only about one third of school-age children attained age-appropriate education levels. Children from the most vulnerable households were less likely to do so than those from moderately or less vulnerable households. Moreover, children from households in all vulnerability categories in the CNO had lower attainment rates than children from the most vulnerable households in the south. Graduation rates in the south were almost double those in the CNO in both treatment and non-treatment groups.



**Figure 4: Educational Attainment (Age-Appropriate Education Level) by Vulnerability Category**

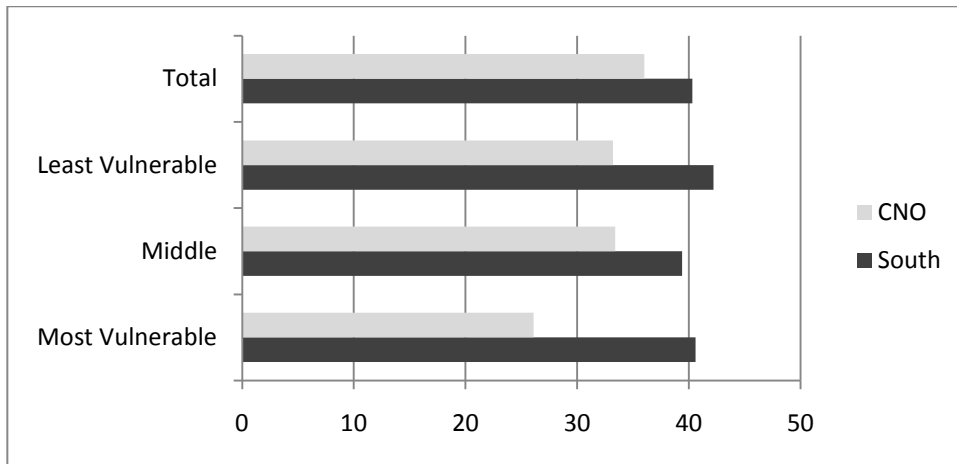
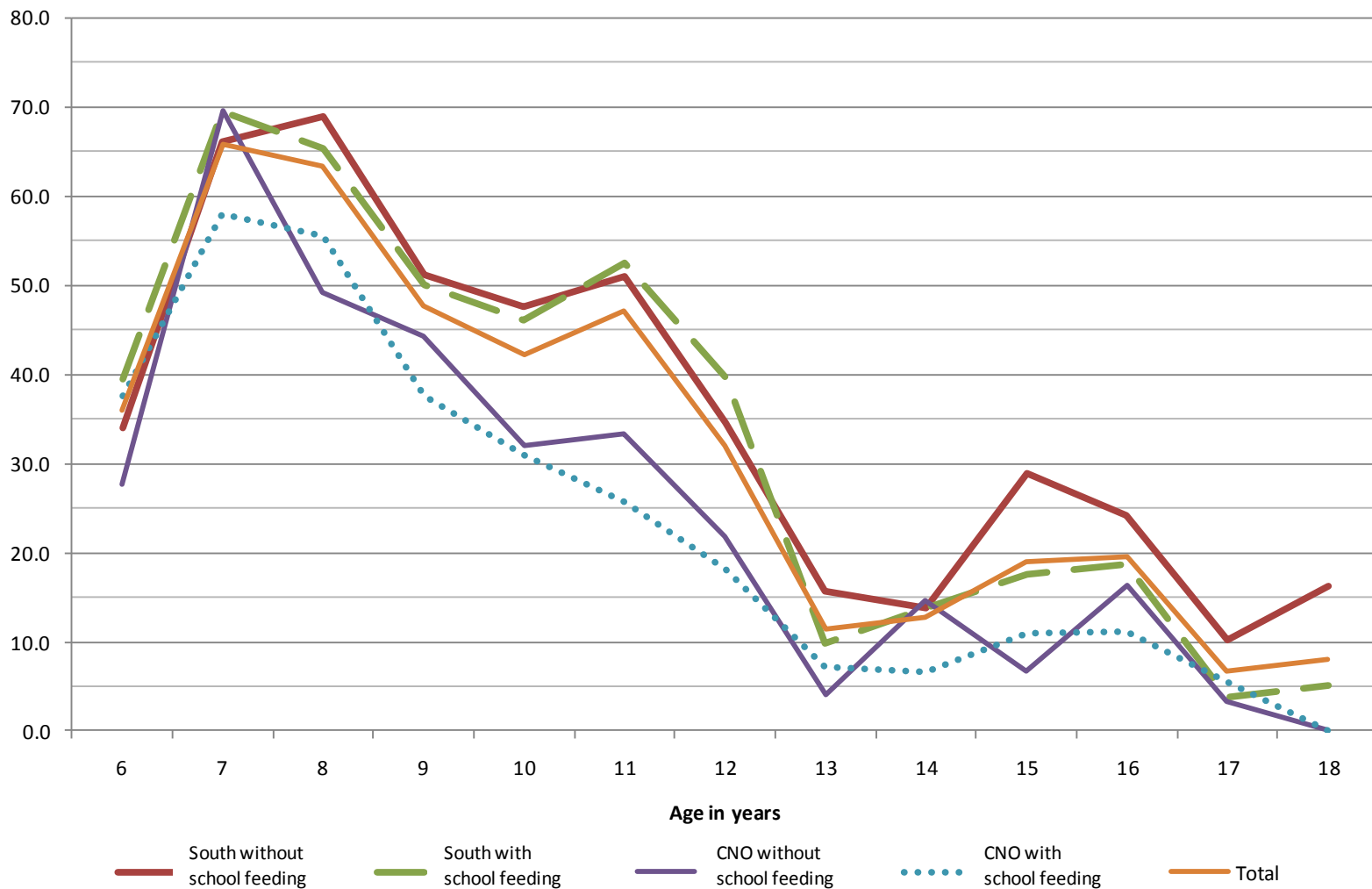




Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Age, Zone and Treatment/Non-treatment



## Nutrition

16. Nutritional enhancement was not an explicit objective of WFP's support to the SFP. In addition, school canteens have not been operating since June 2010, making comparison of household-level dietary diversity and food consumption<sup>3</sup> between treatment and non-treatment communities meaningless.
17. The food baskets provided during the evaluation period differed across time and space and in regularity of supply. Data were incomplete, preventing a systematic review of ration composition. In addition, the political crisis of 2010 prevented the evaluation team from verifying current rations.
18. However, the evaluation found that, on average, households in the CNO ate more meals per day than those in the south, while the most vulnerable households in both zones had far lower dietary diversity – for adults and children – and ate fewer meals per day than other households. For all vulnerability categories, averages in the CNO were lower than those in the south, with the exception of the number of meals for the least vulnerable households, which was not statistically different in the two zones.

## Value Transfer

19. Interruption of the fieldwork prevented calculation of the value of the food transferred. However, in both the south and the CNO, the two most commonly cited benefits of the SFP were savings in food or money for the household, and freeing up adults' time that was often used for productive and income-generating purposes. Households in the most vulnerable category perceived greater benefits from school feeding than the least vulnerable households did.
20. Approximately 50 percent of all households, regardless of vulnerability level, spent less money on food on school feeding days, but between 30 and 40 percent spent the same as on non-feeding days. Nonetheless, 52 percent of the most vulnerable households continued to prepare lunches, while 38 percent did not. Because fieldwork was interrupted, the evaluation team was unable to probe into the reasons why these households continued to prepare meals. Possible explanations could include cultural inappropriateness of the food served at school, and households' uncertainty that a school meal would be provided on any given day. Focus group discussions with parents and children from vulnerable groups would be necessary to determine the actual reasons.
21. Households in the most vulnerable category were more likely to consider the canteen good value for money than households in the other two categories providing they had the cash to pay the 25 CFA francs for the school meal. However, a 1992 evaluation of the Primary School Canteen Programme (1989–1993) had found that the 25 CFA francs charge may have become de facto the main selection criterion for deciding which children would have access to the rations when there were fewer school meals available than children at the school. As a result, the rations were not always being given to the same children – for example, children in the same household may have taken it in turns to receive the money for school feeding – which undermined learning, safety net and nutrition outcomes. In addition, the most vulnerable households with scant or non-existent income tended to be excluded. While recognizing the importance of the principle, the 1992 evaluation had recommended reducing this charge to 15 CFA francs in the poorest regions. However, the 2009 evaluation of PRRO 106720 found that schools were still charging

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<sup>3</sup> These are proxy indicators for measuring nutrition outcomes.

- 25 CFA francs for the meal, plus other fees, leaving highly vulnerable households with no access to school meals.
22. The DNCS mandated schools to establish funds for ensuring that children from the most vulnerable households had access to school feeding, but this does not seem to have been adequate to ensure access.
23. Parents' estimates of annual expenditures on schooling per child did not vary significantly between households from treatment and non-treatment communities. However, there were differences among vulnerability groups. Average per child expenditure for the most vulnerable households was 15,159 CFA francs (about US\$30), compared with 23,903 CFA francs (US\$50) – approximately 60 percent more – for the least vulnerable.
24. As the most vulnerable households have average monthly per capita incomes of approximately US\$14, they may have had to choose which of their children would receive the school meal, because they could not pay for all their children to do so. The fee could be a double disincentive for sending children to school, as the household not only has to pay for the meal, but also loses the child's labour in home-based activities, many of which revolve around food production and transformation.

## HOW DOES SCHOOL FEEDING CREATE IMPACT

### The Role of Contextual Factors outside WFP's Control

25. The civil war significantly influenced the results in several ways. First, with no state funding, social services in the CNO were severely disrupted. Struggling parents had to raise funds among themselves to keep schools running. Second, the protracted instability adversely affected livelihoods, particularly those dependent on cash crop sales and other market-related activities. Third, thefts and extortion at road checkpoints by militias from both sides in the conflict increased the costs of getting to market, and independent organizations<sup>4</sup> have documented widespread human rights abuses, including beatings, killings and rape in both the south and the CNO. The judiciary system became corrupt or non-existent, leaving crimes unpunished and perpetrators free to continue their illegal actions.<sup>5</sup>
26. The combination of lost profits and threats to physical security led to a shift away from cash crops to food crops, also reducing the demand for day labour, a primary source of income for the most vulnerable households. Increasing vulnerability levels reduced households' ability to send their children to school. The most vulnerable households now have incomes significantly lower than their less vulnerable counterparts. The motivations for non-enrolment differed by vulnerability category: parents in the least vulnerable group cited such reasons as "not yet old enough to attend school", while those in the most vulnerable group mentioned mainly financial or cultural reasons. More than one-third stated that they could not afford school, and more than 10 percent did not allow their children to go to school.
27. The most vulnerable households have had to withdraw their children from school, especially during critical points in the agricultural cycle. In these circumstances, there is

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

<sup>5</sup> Eighteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2008/645, 13 October 2008).

also documentary evidence of children being recruited by rebel forces and militia, with concomitant difficulty in readapting to peaceful life at school when schools reopened. The influence of these factors on household decision-making is evident: children from less vulnerable households are significantly more likely to have attained age-appropriate education than their most vulnerable counterparts.

28. Over the ten years being evaluated, donor support was uneven. The protracted conflict, coinciding with a period of significant natural disasters across the world, made it difficult to secure donor commitments, particularly after the Ouagadougou Peace Accords were signed in 2007. At a time when the population's confidence in a return to normalcy was at its highest, and their commitment to educating their children was returning, donor support dropped to 60 percent, limiting the amount of food commodities in the pipeline and the number of days children were fed.

### **The Role of Implementation Factors within WFP's Control**

29. On average, only 29 percent of the households surveyed during the evaluation had a child who had received school meals daily in the last month. This did not vary significantly by zone. Telephone interviews indicated that the percentage of schooldays when meals were served during the 2009/10 academic year averaged slightly less than 45 percent in the CNO and slightly more than 50 percent in the south. In general, when there was no school meal, small children left school at lunch time and did not return. Older children either returned to school after lunch, or stayed in school and did not eat.
30. During the protracted period of instability, WFP's strategy was to maintain support to the Government's "one school, one canteen" policy. As donor fatigue set in after the Ouagadougou Peace Accords, inadequate food stocks, coupled with a decision to continue serving the same number of schools with less food rather than prioritizing fewer schools, resulted in inadequate service to the schools, and reduced project outcomes. According to key informants, the decision to continue providing rice to schools in the south but not in the CNO contributed to communities' perceptions of government bias in favour of the south.

### **The Interaction Between Contextual and Implementation Factors**

31. With the onset of the crisis in September 2002, contextual factors collided with internal implementation factors in the CNO. This had three negative consequences: i) government employees often chose to relocate to the south, or did not receive their salaries, increasing the burden on communities to pay teachers' salaries or stipends to volunteer teachers; ii) schools in the rebel-held areas were initially closed, and when they reopened they did not have food stocks for a daily school feeding service, or resources to support quality education provision; and iii) severe restrictions on movement due to the insecurity strained households' coping strategies, leaving them without the resources necessary to meet all their labour demands and send their children to school.
32. Anecdotal information from community members indicated that monitoring of food stocks was not strong once the food had been distributed to the local inspectorates of primary education for collection by the communities. When the local inspectorates were not fully functional or when NGOs were distributing the food stocks to communities, the insecurity situation made it difficult for external monitors to ensure compliance with the programme, and parents and teachers did not feel empowered to monitor effective use of the food stocks.

## CONCLUSIONS

33. The SFP as originally designed prior to the crisis was relevant to the needs at the time and clearly supported the Government's desire to improve school enrolment and achievement, particularly for girls, through its "one school, one canteen" policy. However, as instability continued beyond the emergency phase, the instruments available to WFP and the relationship between WFP and the DNCS no longer supported expected educational outcomes or safety net benefits.
34. Although WFP operations provided meals, using fortified food, to a very large number of children in the CNO and the south, the total number and regularity of meal days were inadequate to stimulate enrolment, attendance and completion. There were no differences in enrolment and achievement rates between treatment and non-treatment groups in either the south or the CNO. In addition, girls continued to lag behind boys in completion of primary school. Potential nutrition impacts could not be measured because school canteens stopped functioning in June 2010, before the evaluation fieldwork started. There was only weak evidence that the school meals conferred significant advantage to households as a value transfer, particularly to the most vulnerable. For these households, the unreliability of school meals made the trade-off between education and home labour too costly to continue sending children to school.
35. External factors caused by the protracted conflict also significantly influenced the results by increasing vulnerability levels, thereby reducing households' ability to educate their children, particularly in the most vulnerable households whose incomes are now significantly lower than those of their less vulnerable counterparts. Some families saw the restart of the SFP as an indication that normalcy was returning, but the unpredictability of the food allocation reduced this inducement for keeping children in school.
36. Prior to the crisis, there was strong justification for WFP to support a truly nationally owned programme. The Government had developed a sustainability strategy that WFP was committed to supporting until the SFP had reached self-sufficiency through its focus on home-grown food production at the community level. However, this strategy did not fully serve WFP's education, gender and safety net objectives when the Government no longer had control of 60 percent of the country and 40 percent of the population.
37. In the face of decreased funding and increased demand after 2007, WFP's concurrence with the DNCS decision to serve the same number of schools with less food, rather than prioritizing and serving fewer schools, also had a negative effect on results. In addition, during the period of protracted instability and increasing geographical inequality in the country, the provision of different food baskets to different geographical areas may have contributed to perceptions of inequity.
38. The crisis that erupted in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 closed education services and limited the evaluation team's ability to understand the full implications of the socio-political instability for vulnerable households. Until more in-depth information can be obtained through vulnerability and security assessments of vulnerable households, new models of cooperation cannot be proposed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations within WFP's purview

39. **Recommendation 1:** Refocus school feeding support on improving enrolment, completion and pass rates, particularly for the most vulnerable households, when the socio-political situation stabilizes. Once the present crisis has been resolved, conduct a study to better understand the underlying causes of girls' lower participation in school, so that the strategy selected captures the particular challenges faced by girls.
40. **Recommendation 2:** Improve the regularity of participatory monitoring, initially by WFP staff and subsequently by food management sub-committees at the school level, so that communities increase their confidence in the commitment of WFP and the DNCS to school canteens and to improving access to education, particularly for girls.
41. **Recommendation 3:** Reintroduce take-home rations or cash transfers for extremely vulnerable households during the lean season until crops have been harvested, to encourage households to continue sending their children to school instead of withdrawing them to provide labour at critical moments in the food production cycle.

### Recommendations Requiring Collaboration with other Actors

42. **Recommendation 4:** Renegotiate the targeting strategy with the DNCS, to ensure that children from the most vulnerable households have access to school feeding. The strategy could include: i) establishing a scholarship fund using a portion of the 10 CFA francs per student meal currently reimbursed to the DNCS to cover school feeding operational costs, so that the most vulnerable households have access to school meals; or ii) establishing a country-wide policy ensuring that the most vulnerable households have access to the meals.
43. **Recommendation 5:** Match coverage to resources. Where the resources available are expected to be less than planned, provide food to fewer schools, giving priority to those in the most food-insecure and socio-politically insecure areas of the country. Pipelines should be maintained for 90 percent of all schooldays. This will require a judicious selection of communities for WFP support, using the results of a country-wide food security and risk assessment.
44. **Recommendation 6:** Revitalize the food management subcommittees in schools by building their capacity to monitor the SFP and to hold the DNCS accountable for food quality and quantity, so that efficiency, effectiveness and community confidence in the system can be maintained.
45. **Recommendation 7:** With the DNCS and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), develop a range of activities for community groups, to promote the sustainability of school canteens. Producing food for consumption in schools is only one option, and other alternatives should be explored, particularly for peri-urban communities and communities where there are tensions over land ownership.
46. **Recommendation 8:** Where the lean season and harvest season coincide with school holidays, negotiate with the DNCS to consider offering life skills education for school drop-outs, with WFP supporting their attendance by providing school meals and take-home rations.
47. **Recommendation 9:** Once the present crisis has abated, identify schools with lower than national/regional average completion rates, and conduct focus group discussions with

a wide spectrum of parents, teachers and elders to determine how these rates could be improved. If quality of education is the barrier, identify organizations working in the education sector in the area and explore their willingness to include these communities in their programming, with WFP providing food assistance.

48. **Recommendation 10:** If the current crisis continues, WFP should conduct a rapid food security assessment, holding focus group discussions with representatives – women, men and children – from the various household vulnerability categories, to determine the relevance of the current school feeding modality and what needs to be changed for the SFP to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable households. This work is necessary before the appropriate mix of delivery mechanisms – cash transfers, take-home rations, biscuits, hot meals in school – for sustaining households’ commitment to the education of primary school-age children during protracted instability can be identified.



## ANNEX

### MAP OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE AFTER 2003 LINAS-MARCOUSSIS AGREEMENT



## LEGEND:

Government-controlled zone (South)

Zone not controlled by Government (Forces nouvelles) - CNO

Buffer zone established in 2003, transformed into Zone of Confidence under the 2007 Ouagadougou Agreement

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Food Programme (WFP) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.

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## ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

CNO	Central North West zone ( <i>Centre Nord Ouest</i> )
DNCS	National School Feeding Directorate ( <i>Direction nationale des cantines scolaires</i> )
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NGO	non-governmental organization
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SFP	school feeding programme