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## Successes and Challenges of Implementing USDA McGovern-Dole Funded Food for Education Programmes in the Asia/Pacific Region

A Review of Key Findings from WFP Programme Evaluations in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Nepal during 2013-2018



World Food  
Programme

August 2019



# Introduction

This exercise was commissioned by WFP's Regional Bureau Bangkok (RBB) in response to two requests: i) one from WFP's Regional Evaluation Committee (REvCO) for RBB to provide learning opportunities for Country Offices implementing McGovern-Dole monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements, and ii) one of the recommendations of the McGovern-Dole Endline Evaluation of WFP's Food for Education (FFE) programme in Cambodia (2013-2016). The recommendation was to undertake a meta-analysis of the successes and weaknesses of the USDA McGovern-Dole Programme approach to school feeding across the Asia/Pacific region.<sup>1</sup> After discussions among Programme and M&E staff at RBB and with the four Country Offices who were implementing McGovern-Dole funded FFE programmes in the region at the time of this exercise (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal), it was concluded that a summary of the key learnings from previously conducted McGovern-Dole evaluations would be most beneficial for school feeding activities in the Asia/Pacific region.

## Objectives and Questions

The main objective of this exercise is to learn from the evaluations conducted in McGovern-Dole programme countries in the Asia/Pacific region. By reviewing evaluation findings using a common analytical framework, RBB is aiming to provide Country Offices with insights on the strengths and weaknesses of the McGovern-Dole approach to school feeding and highlight regional learning.

The aim of this exercise is to answer the following questions:

1. Have McGovern-Dole funded school feeding programmes achieved their objectives to improve literacy, and increase the use of health and dietary practices during the time period 2013-2018?
2. Have McGovern-Dole funded school feeding programmes in the Asia/Pacific region enabled governments to successfully transition to nationally-owned school feeding programmes during the time period 2013-2018?
3. What are the factors that positively or negatively influenced the ability of the programmes to reach their objectives?

The findings of this exercise have the primary purpose of providing a basis for discussions among the M&E and programme teams of the relevant Country Offices and RBB on how their programmes can be strengthened. There is also potential for the findings to contribute to the WFP Regional School Feeding Strategy.

## Users

The primary users of this exercise are:

- WFP Country Offices and WFP's implementing partners in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Nepal, to use the key learnings to improve their McGovern-Dole FFE programmes as well as the way they are monitored and evaluated.
- WFP RBB to use the key learnings for wider organizational learning, to improve WFP's school feeding activities, and the way they are monitored and evaluated across the region.

Other secondary users of this exercise may include:

- Other WFP offices that implement USDA McGovern-Dole FFE programmes, and other WFP Regional Bureaux that support USDA McGovern-Dole programmes for regional and global learning, programme improvement and strategic adjustments.
- The governments in the four countries, the Asia/Pacific region and worldwide who are planning to transition WFP's school feeding programmes to national ownership, to learn from the successes of the McGovern-Dole approach.
- Other donors and implementing partners of school feeding programmes such as USAID, DFAT, UNICEF, UNFPA or the World Bank.
- The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil in its role for provision of technical guidance and sharing of knowledge.

## Scope

The subjects of this exercise are the four McGovern-Dole school feeding programmes in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Nepal. These were all the WFP programmes in the Asia/Pacific region that were receiving FFE grants during the time period 2013 to

<sup>1</sup> The KonTerra Group (2017) Endline Evaluation of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Grant Food for Education (FFE) Programme for WFP Cambodia 2013-2016 Evaluation Report, p. 51.



2018. The findings and lessons from this implementation period, as analysed in the following evaluations, will be the main subject of this exercise:

- Final Evaluation of the McGovern-Dole-supported School Feeding Programme in Bangladesh (March 2015 to December 2017)<sup>2</sup>
- Endline Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant Food for Education (FFE) Programme for WFP Cambodia (2013-2016)<sup>3</sup>
- USDA McGovern-Dole FY14 Endline Evaluation in Lao PDR (FY14-16)<sup>4</sup>
- USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program in Nepal (2014-2017)<sup>5</sup>

These endline evaluations were chosen as the main source of information to answer the first question of this exercise, as the analysis of the achievement of objectives and programme targets required endline values of the monitored indicators. Some additional indicator tracking data was also provided by Country Offices.

For the analysis of the second question on the transition to national ownership, additional, more recent information was utilized, including baseline and mid-term evaluations of the most recent phase of programming and SABER reports, where available:

- Bangladesh Baseline McGovern-Dole School Feeding Programme Evaluation (2018-2022)<sup>6</sup>
- Baseline evaluation of WFP Cambodia's USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education programme (2017-2019)<sup>7</sup>
- Mid-term review of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant for WFP School Feeding in Cambodia (SY 2016/17 and 2017/18)<sup>8</sup>
- Baseline study for the USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education Programme in Nepal (2018-2022)<sup>9</sup>
- Gill, N (2015) Nepal School Feeding SABER Country Report
- World Bank (2016) Presentation of SABER results: Dhaka – 23-24 August 2016

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<sup>2</sup> Econometria (2018) Final Evaluation of McGovern-Dole-supported School Feeding Programme in Bangladesh: March 2015 – December 2017. September 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The KonTerra Group (2017) Endline Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant Food for Education (FFE) Programme for WFP Cambodia (2013-2016). Evaluation Report, November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> NRMC (2018) USDA McGovern-Dole FY14 Endline Evaluation in Lao PDR (FY14-16). Report of Endline Evaluation. October 2018

<sup>5</sup> Sambodhi Research and Narma Consulting (2018) USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program in Nepal (2014-2017). Draft Endline Evaluation Report. April 2019.

<sup>6</sup> NRMC (2018) USDA McGovern-Dole FY17 Baseline Study in Bangladesh. Final Report of Baseline Evaluation.

<sup>7</sup> The KonTerra Group (2017) Baseline report for WFP Cambodia and the USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education program 2017-2019. December 2017.

<sup>8</sup> The KonTerra Group (2018) Mid-term review of USDA McGovern-Dole Grant FFE-442-2016/015-00 for WFP School Feeding in Cambodia covering school years 2016/17 and 2017/18.

<sup>9</sup> Sambodhi Research and Narma Consulting (2018) USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program in Nepal (2018-2021). Draft Final Baseline Study Report. October 2018.

# Methodology

The methodology for this summary of findings was desk-based and included comparing the outcomes of the four end-line evaluations that are subject of this exercise. An analytical framework was developed to transparently analyse evidence from the source evaluation reports. It was used to analyse both the quantitative and the qualitative findings and recommendations from the individual evaluation reports along the analytical dimensions of 'question', 'sub-question' and 'country'.

The analysis included the identification of similarities and differences in the findings between countries, with due consideration of the findings' strategic importance. Weighting by frequency and significance of findings was initially planned but could not be carried out due to significant differences in the quality and presentation of data in the four endline evaluations.

Where key programmatic aspects were not clear or not covered in the evaluation reports, the respective Country Office programme teams were approached for clarification.

Findings of this exercise were reviewed by all four Country Offices whose programmes are subject of this exercise, the Regional School Feeding Officer, School Feeding Division at headquarters (OSF), Office of Evaluation (OEV) and US Relations Office of WFP.

## Limitations

Several challenges were found when comparing the evaluation reports, which has affected the analysis of findings. The main challenges were:

- Due to time constraints the scope of the exercise could not be extended to include additional studies that were supported by WFP. For example, the Cost-Benefit Analyses of school meals programmes conducted in Lao PDR and Nepal, and the Home-Grown School Feeding Feasibility Study conducted in Cambodia.
- The summary has mainly focused on the successes and weaknesses of the in-school meal activity, with limited inclusion of the take-home ration activity as it is only implemented in Cambodia.

- It was difficult to compare findings across evaluation reports as countries used different indicators to measure the success of their programmes. Similarly, the programme targets were also different, and therefore not directly comparable. To overcome this, the review has tried to include all indicators used to measure the programme outcomes, and to quantify the results when available.
- The evaluation reports were written by different teams, focusing on different aspects of the programmes, depending on the Terms of Reference provided by the Country Offices. This meant that some aspects of the programme were not described as fully in some evaluation reports as in others. This also meant that the evaluation findings were not always directly comparable.
- Lastly, evaluation reports made only limited mention of programme targets. Although all the McGovern-Dole funded programmes have agreed targets as part of their agreement negotiation, not all evaluation reports made reference to them. As a result, the review team contacted the programme teams directly and used additional information to assess whether programme targets were reached.



A child after eating his school meal in Oudomxay Province, Laos.  
© WFP/Rein Skullerud





A student waters her school garden in Laos.  
© WFP/Jake Henkle



# McGovern-Dole Results Frameworks

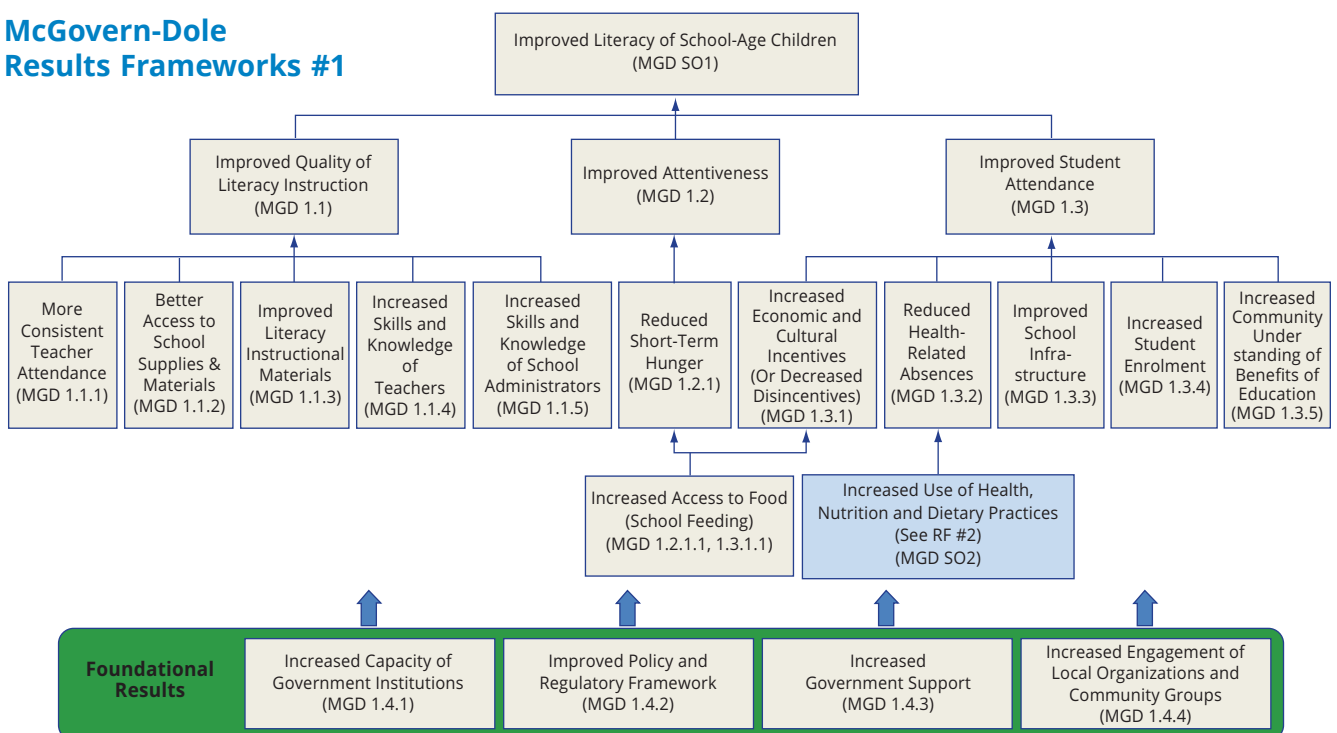
The McGovern-Dole FFE Programme helps support education, child development and food security and nutrition in low-income, food-deficit countries around the globe. The programme provides agricultural commodities from the United States of America and financial and technical assistance to support school feeding and maternal and child nutrition projects.<sup>10</sup>

McGovern-Dole FFE programmes have two strategic objectives: i) to improve literacy of school-age children with a focus on early grade reading and ii) to increase the use of health and dietary practices.<sup>11</sup> To reach these two objectives, specific activities are implemented and monitored against two results frameworks, each of which illustrates a theory about how the two objectives can be achieved. The second objective – increased use of health and dietary practices – helps achieve the first objective – improved literacy in students. The two results frameworks are therefore interrelated.

In addition to these strategic objectives, the Results Frameworks include a set of foundational results that help foster the capacity and commitment of the host government, local community groups, and other actors to support the achievement of other results in the framework and eventually graduate from USDA assistance. These foundational results feed into the higher-level results.

**Results Framework 1:** This framework depicts the theory that improved literacy will be achieved, if three results streams are achieved. The three results streams are i) improved quality of literacy instruction, ii) improved student attendance and iii) improved student attentiveness. These three results streams are achieved through sub-streams, which the programme addresses through various activities, including a school meals programme.

## McGovern-Dole Results Frameworks #1



**A Note on Foundational Results:** These results can feed into one or more higher-level results. Causal relationships sometimes exist between foundational results.

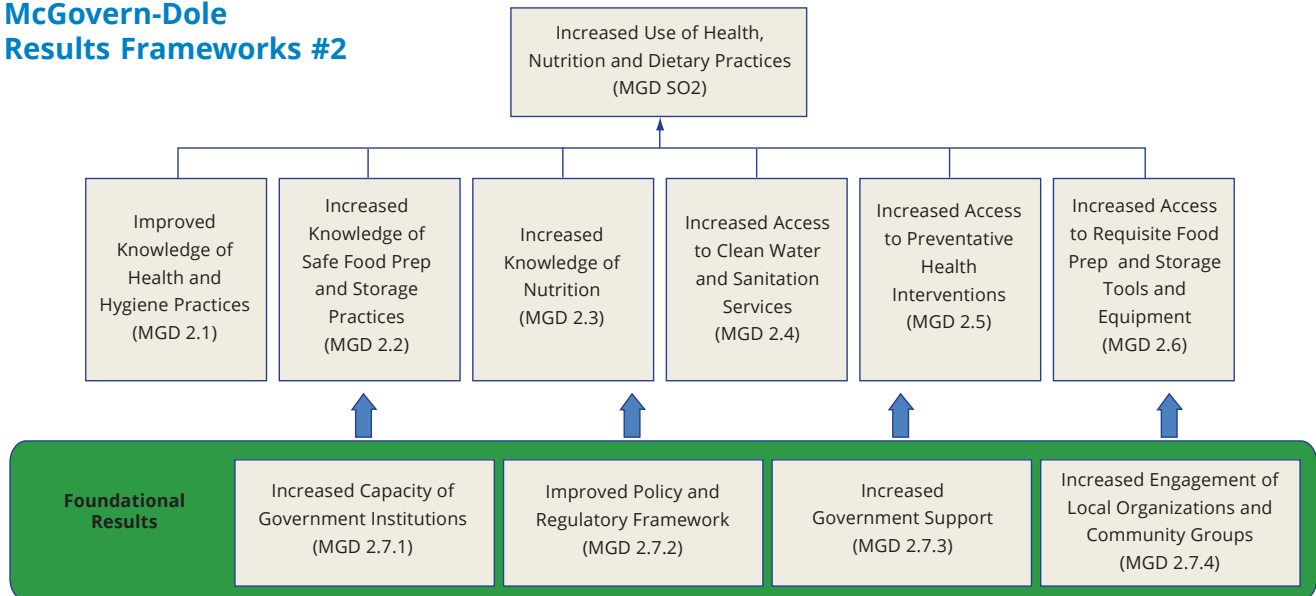
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/mcgovern-dole-food-education-program>

<sup>11</sup> In 2019 USDA changed this strategic objective to “increase the use of health, **nutrition** and dietary practices” however for the purposes of this review, the old wording has been used as per the reviewed evaluation reports.

**Results Framework 2:** The objective of this framework is to increase the use of health and dietary practices, primarily by school age children, but also by parents, families and school staff. This objective is intended to support reduced health-related absences of students and provide a healthy school environment (access to

clean water, provision of toilets and handwashing facilities, etc.) which is conducive to learning. The achievement of this objective depends on achieving six health and nutrition related outcomes and helps to support the achievement of the first objective in the Literacy Results Framework.

## McGovern-Dole Results Frameworks #2



**A Note on Foundational Results:** These results can feed into one or more higher-level results. Causal relationships sometimes exist between foundational results.



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