



World Vision



# SCHOOL MEALS

Myanmar  
Case Study



# WHEN SCHOOL MEALS PUT COMMUNITIES IN THE DRIVING SEAT

A cash-based school meals pilot is helping earthquake-affected schools keep children learning while strengthening local ownership.

NUTRITION • EDUCATION • SOCIAL PROTECTION • COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

## Context

School feeding programmes play a critical role in protecting children's nutrition, supporting school attendance and contributing to broader education and social protection outcomes.

In fragile and crisis-affected contexts, maintaining access to school meals can be particularly challenging, even as children's needs increase.

The experience in Myanmar demonstrates how school feeding programmes can adapt to operational disruptions while strengthening local ownership and delivery systems.

Following an earthquake and amid ongoing logistical constraints, the **World Food Programme (WFP)** and World Vision Myanmar piloted an alternative school feeding model in Myanmar's Mandalay Region.

Rather than relying on the distribution of food commodities, the programme provided cash transfers to schools, enabling local procurement and school-based meal preparation.

The initiative reached more than **10,000 students** in **52 schools** across **Amarapura, Patheingyi, Sintgaing** and **Tada-U townships**.

The pilot offers insights into how school feeding can support continuity of services during emergencies while advancing longer-term objectives related to local systems strengthening and community participation.

## Addressing Delivery Challenges in Emergency Contexts

Delivering school meals through centrally procured commodities can be challenging in emergency and recovery settings.

Transportation, storage and distribution requirements can increase operational complexity and reduce flexibility at a time when rapid adaptation may be required.





0.9 USD per child,  
daily allocation



52 participating  
schools



10,532 students  
impacted

Schools may also face administrative burdens associated with receiving, storing and managing food commodities. In Myanmar, these challenges were compounded by earthquake-related disruption.

To maintain support to children while reducing logistical constraints, programme partners introduced a cash-based modality that transferred resources directly to participating schools.

Prior to implementation, market assessments were conducted to determine food availability and local pricing, informing a daily allocation of **2,000 Myanmar Kyats (1 USD) per child.**

By enabling local procurement, the approach sought to ensure continued access to school meals while increasing programme responsiveness to local conditions.

## Strengthening School-Level Ownership and Governance

A central feature of the pilot was the establishment of school meals committees in every participating school.

This shifted operational decision-making closer to schools and communities and promoted greater participation among local stakeholders. Parents were also engaged in meal preparation, reducing the burden on teachers and reinforcing community ownership of the programme.

The experience highlights the importance of governance structures in strengthening school feeding systems. Beyond food delivery, school meals programmes can serve as platforms for community engagement, accountability and local capacity development.



## Supporting Local Food Systems

The pilot also strengthened links between school feeding and local food systems. Participating schools procured ingredients from local suppliers and village markets, creating opportunities to diversify menus while supporting local economic activity. In some communities, parents contributed additional resources, including vegetables, firewood and charcoal, to support meal preparation.

This approach reflects a growing emphasis within school feeding programmes globally on maximising multiple benefits through local procurement and stronger connections with local food systems.

School meals have the potential not only to improve children's nutrition and learning outcomes but also to contribute to local economic development and community resilience.

The Myanmar experience demonstrates how locally managed procurement approaches can increase programme flexibility while fostering stronger relationships between schools, communities and local markets.

## Early Results for Children and Communities

Implementation began in June 2026 under challenging operating conditions. During the first month, the programme provided **seven days of school meals to 10,532 students.**

While fluctuations in student registration data limited implementation to fewer feeding days than originally planned, participating schools successfully established the systems and structures required for programme delivery. The committees assumed responsibility for managing school meal resources and overseeing implementation.

Monitoring visits and consultations with school leaders indicated increased community participation following the introduction of school meals committees. Headteachers also reported improvements in school attendance among participating students.

*"Thank you very much for providing us with nutritious meals. We would also want to thank people who prepare different dishes every day so that we do not get bored with the same food."*

**- Mg Myint, a participating student from Tada U Township.**



Although these findings are preliminary, they reinforce broader evidence that school feeding programmes can support children's participation in education while serving as an important safety net during periods of instability.

The experience further illustrates how school meals can help maintain a connection between children and schools when communities are affected by crises.

### Operational Lessons

The pilot also generated important lessons for implementation in fragile settings. One of the principal challenges involved restrictions on cash withdrawals from local banks, which delayed access to resources needed for meal preparation.

Programme teams addressed this issue through engagement with banking authorities and other stakeholders.

The experience underscored the importance of functioning financial systems, market assessments and strong stakeholder coordination when implementing cash-based school feeding interventions.

It also highlighted the need for robust governance mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability at school level.

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Several key lessons emerged:

- Cash-based modalities can provide greater flexibility than commodity-based approaches in contexts where logistics and access are constrained.
- School meals committees can strengthen accountability, transparency and community ownership.
- Local procurement can support more diverse menus while strengthening links with local markets and food systems.
- Parent participation can contribute to programme sustainability and reduce demands on school staff.
- Community engagement, including the participation of women, can enhance programme implementation and local ownership.





## Looking Ahead

Myanmar's cash-based school meals pilot provides a practical example of how school feeding programmes can adapt to complex operating environments while continuing to support children.

By decentralising procurement and delivery, the initiative maintained access to school meals, strengthened community engagement and fostered closer connections with local food systems.

The experience highlights the value of investing in resilient delivery models that can sustain school feeding during crises while contributing to longer-term systems development. As countries seek to strengthen nationally owned school feeding programmes, community-led and locally adapted approaches may offer important pathways for improving resilience, programme sustainability and child-centred outcomes.

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