

Albania

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere

Summary of Findings

Meal delivery began in mid-November 2001 to three pilot schools and expanded to 64 schools by mid-March 2002. As of April of 2002, 16,023 students were eating a school meal every school day. The Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) reported surges in attendance as regular non-attendees began coming to class, with increases of up to 17 percent. CARE also reported an increase in the number of girls relative to boys who are coming to classes. Attendance for girls increased 5.6 percent, compared with a 5.3-percent increase for boys. There were also marked declines in absenteeism across all the schools. The program is scheduled through February 2003, with an extension to run until June 2003.

Country Overview

The poorest low-income country in Europe, Albania is making the difficult transition to a more open-market economy.¹²⁹ It is ranked 85th of 162 countries according to United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index.¹³⁰ In the spring and summer of 1999, with an apparently stable economy and government, 465,000 Kosovar refugees sought shelter in Albania during the war in Kosovo. Hosting this large refugee community continues to place a considerable burden on Albania's already weak infrastructure and social institutions.¹³¹

Forty-six percent of the Albanian population lives on an income below the poverty line.¹³² According to the Albanian Poverty Reduction Strategy, poverty is found primarily in rural areas. Within that context, the poorest prefectures are Kukës, Lac, Gramsh, Bulqizë, Dibër, Librazhd, and Pukë. Indeed, four out of five poor people live in rural areas. Of those who are poor, more than one-third have only an elementary education, and the poverty expectancy for uneducated heads of household is 37 percent in rural areas.¹³³

Regarding gender parity in education, the Government of Albania reports that there are no tangible differences between boys and girls, but there are significant differences in dropout rates between urban and rural areas. While 87 percent of urban children who enroll in first grade will finish primary school, that figure is only 77 percent in rural

¹²⁹ Internal draft "Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO) July 2002-December 2003" document, WFP/Albania.

¹³⁰ "Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy." Government of Albania. November 2001.

¹³¹ USAID Country Profile. www.usaid.gov/regions/europe.

¹³² Op cit. Government of Albania.

¹³³ Ibid.

areas. The primary causes of school dropout are different for different levels: For preschool, it is the closure of the public institutions; for compulsory school, economic reasons (35 percent) and the low quality of education (20 percent) predominate. Twelve percent of the population over 15 years of age is illiterate.¹³⁴

Thirty-two percent of children in Albania suffer moderate to severe stunting due to inadequate nutrition, and another 11 percent suffer chronically from moderate to severe wasting.¹³⁵ Only 45 percent of the population has access to potable water in their homes.¹³⁶ Less than half of households use iodized salt, which has led to marked levels of iodine deficiency.¹³⁷

The experience of the World Food Program (WFP) has shown that providing food in school both decreases hunger and increases school attendance.¹³⁸ Research confirms that education is one of the most effective investments to improving economies and enabling people to improve their lives. For example, a United Nations' study showed that in countries with an adult literacy rate of about 40 percent, GNP per capita averaged \$210; in those countries with at least an 80-percent literacy rate, GNP per capita was \$1,000 and above. Other studies show that girls who go to school marry later and have an average of 50 percent fewer children. Research also indicates that women's education contributes to the reduction of child malnutrition.¹³⁹ Indeed, in Albania, children of mothers with less than a secondary school education are more likely to be underweight and underdeveloped than children of mothers with secondary school or higher educational levels.¹⁴⁰

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Global Food for Education (GFE) program is designed to mitigate certain economic reasons for low attendance, relieve hunger-based hindrances to classroom learning, and improve the educational environment for students and teachers. CARE decided to focus GFE interventions in the poorest prefecture in the country. The project was to feed 15,434 children in 45 selected schools in Kukes and repair 30 schools damaged during 10 years of social unrest in the area.

Commodity Management

The requested commodity was 18,500 metric tons of wheat. The wheat was to be monetized, with the proceeds from the sales used to implement the project's multiple components designed not only to increase enrollment, attendance, and performance, but also to enhance the learning environment.¹⁴¹ CARE received the wheat in two shipments in November and December 2001. Both shipments were for monetization, which

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ World Food Program School Feeding Survey results. www.wfp.org

¹³⁶ Op cit. Government of Albania.

¹³⁷ Op cit. WFP/Albania.

¹³⁸ Op cit. WFP School Feeding Survey Results.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Op cit. Government of Albania.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

proceeded after a delay of several months. The delay caused the project's startup to occur well into the school year. However, losses, damages, and taxes were transferred contractually to the buyers so that CARE did not sustain any losses.

Project Overview

Goals and objectives: CARE established multiple goals and objectives for the GFE project. In order to meet the overall goals of increasing enrollment, attendance, and performance (especially for girls), CARE proposed the following objectives:

- Purchase food at local markets and implement a direct school feeding program for 15,434 children in 45 selected schools in northern Albania.
- Repair and rehabilitate 30 schools in the region, which have substantial enrollment levels.
- Promote greater involvement of communities and parent-teacher associations (PTA's) in educational and extra-curricular activities that improve the quality of education and benefit the school children.

Implementation status: Meal delivery began in mid-November 2001 in some schools after a delay from the intended start scheduled for September 2001. The delay was due to late arrival and monetization of the commodities. The meal program will continue through the summer months. The 12-month project was scheduled to end in February 2003, but it has been extended until June 2003 in order to complete the school year. During the project startup in September and October, prior to the completion of monetization, CARE identified target schools using the following criteria: Access to the school by road for food delivery and monitoring of activity; number of students enrolled; and approval from the District Board of Education Directors.

Based on these criteria, three schools were selected as a pilot to begin the feeding in November 2001. The project was then expanded to 45 schools by the end of December, 51 by the end of January 2002, 55 by the end of February, and then to 64 schools by mid-March 2002. Forty-two of the schools are in Kukes, 20 are in Has, and two are in Tropoje. As of April 30, 2002, 16,023 students had received a mid-morning meal during recess every school day. The feeding is focused on kindergarten and grades one through eight. A few older students who study in the same building receive meals as well. More than 1,000 teachers also receive the mid-morning meal.

The feeding is handled by local commercial food vendors, who were selected through a competitive bid process. However, in two isolated rural communities in which no acceptable local vendor was found, the parents were mobilized and receive direct payment to prepare meals at home that the children bring every day.¹⁴²

CARE based the school menus on the results of a school questionnaire among 574 students. With additional input from parents, local vendors, and teachers, the menu

¹⁴² CARE GFE Project Status Report May 15, 2002. Tirana, Albania.

selected was bread (100 grams), cheese (30 grams), meatball (50 grams) or salami (25 grams), one hard-boiled egg, one seasonal fruit, and a small juice for the kindergarten students. Most children eat the entire meal at school; however, for those who walk up to seven kilometers each way, many often save part of the meal for the walk home.¹⁴³

CARE provides small grants to PTA's to finance school and educational improvements. This encourages PTA initiatives to organize school-based community activities, which provide a venue for informal contact between parents and teachers. Examples of funded projects include regional excursions for children from isolated villages, organization of intramural sports programs, cleaning of school surroundings, and environmental awareness and protection programs. CARE has also used these occasions to distribute mine awareness posters produced by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Albanian Mine Awareness Foundation.

CARE will begin its infrastructure repair work in May 2002 and continue through the school holiday months of June-August. GFE funds will be utilized to improve 30 schools that serve 12,000 students. CARE will provide desks for 1,010 students in 20 schools in Puke District and repair 21 schools in Has, Kukes, and Tropoje Districts. Local construction companies competed in a limited tender, and the bids were opened in the Tirana office of CARE in late April. More than 60 local firms competed.

During the first four months of actual GFE school feeding, 16,023 students received daily school lunches in 43 schools in Kukes, 19 schools in Has, and two schools in Tropoje Districts. Furthermore, during the most severe winter in northern Albania since the 1970's, GFE food suppliers continued to provide meals to students in almost all rural schools in the area. "While the Albanian government and Red Cross airlifted emergency food supplies to stranded villagers by helicopter, the CARE USDA GFE school feeding activities supported household food security by providing one meal every day for participating pupils in these areas."¹⁴⁴

Other donor support: CARE distributes mine awareness posters produced by UNICEF, UNDP, and the Albanian Mine Awareness Foundation. Teachers, school officials, and parents contribute labor and logistical support at the school sites.

Sustainability: This is a serious issue and will continue to be analyzed. In its focus on improving education in Albania, the government proposes to increase attendance through eighth grade using a variety of strategies including providing scholarships, textbooks, and food.¹⁴⁵ The PTA's facilitated by CARE represent sustainable infrastructure enhancements that will help resolve local school needs into the future. Other aspects of this program are sustainable beyond GFE. These include parent and teacher training, community empowerment, infrastructure developments, and community support for education.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Executive Report, GFE General Activity Report, October 2001-March 2002. CARE/Kukes.

¹⁴⁵ Op cit. Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Monitoring and evaluation: Both USDA and CARE will be carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities during the project. CARE has been carrying out extensive monitoring of its GFE project, developing a database to track attendance when official records proved less than satisfactory. It sends monitors to villages to examine the implementation of GFE. Even during the harshest winter months, with few exceptions, CARE reported that its monitors were able to visit schools and observe the GFE project. USDA has hired a local monitor to carry out the survey of 20 sample schools and the local monitoring for USDA.

CARE and the USDA monitor will coordinate their monitoring and evaluation efforts to avoid redundancies while ensuring independence of action. As a group, the personnel will discuss factors that could impact a GFE project's success and reach consensus on the factors to use in the development of a sample matrix. The factors identified would contribute significantly to success or failure of any educational effort. They would also impact the administration and supervision of the project by Catholic Relief Services.

A matrix will be developed of all CARE schools. Schools will then be chosen from each cell on a random basis to arrive at the 20 sample schools. CARE has gathered baseline data on enrollment and attendance in all of its GFE kindergartens. The USDA monitor will use a questionnaire to obtain preliminary baseline data before initiating focus groups of parents for qualitative data collection.

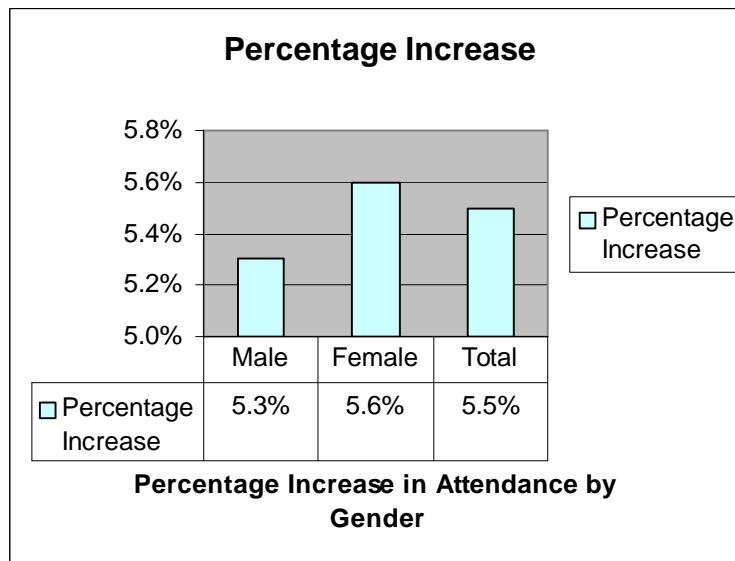
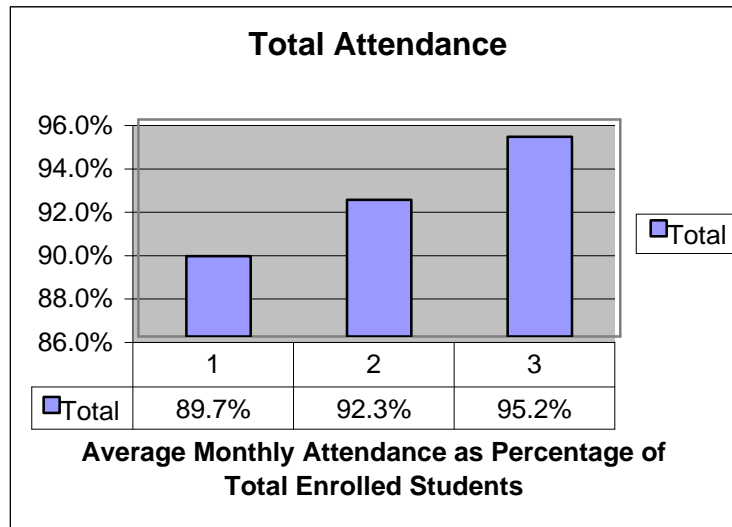
Project Impact

Enrollment: CARE decided to develop its own statistical database to track enrollment and attendance figures. Official enrollment statistics were not useful for the purposes of GFE monitoring because once a student is enrolled, the child is maintained on the official records of the original school even if the child later drops out or transfers to another school. There is not yet anything statistically significant to report.¹⁴⁶

Attendance: In the first four months of feeding, CARE has seen four kinds of increases attributable to the GFE project. The first was an attendance surge, which came after the introduction of the daily lunches in the schools when a number of regular non-attendees began coming to class. For example, attendance increased by 12.8 percent in the border school of Orgjost, and a striking 17 percent in the predominately Slavic-speaking rural village of Brekije. The second kind of increase was identified after CARE had constructed its database of sample schools and reflected a broader pattern of steadily increasing attendance. This was particularly noticeable in rural villages like Mamez, which registered a 17.3-percent overall increase. A third kind of increase attributable to GFE is the impressive increase in younger pupils in kindergartens served by GFE. The average attendance increase was 10.1 percent, more than twice the increase typical for the other primary school grades.

¹⁴⁶ CARE/Albania Memorandum to GFE Regional Coordinator, June 2002.

Lastly, GFE registered an increase in the number of girls relative to boys who are coming to classes during GFE feeding. Prior to GFE, there was a noticeable (1.5 percent) difference in the number of boys who went to school compared with the number of girls. After feeding began, the number of girls attending school increased by 5.6 percent, compared with a 5.3-percent increase for boys.¹⁴⁷ The charts below are from CARE Albania's Statistical Annex to the June 2002 Executive Summary report.



Performance: Evaluating the impact of GFE on student performance would be premature after only four months of school feeding.

¹⁴⁷ CARE/Albania General Activity Report Executive Summary, February 15 through June 15, 2002.

Special emphasis on girls: Prior to the GFE project, there was a notable difference in attendance between girls and boys, with girls having a higher absentee rate. During the initial four months of the feeding program, attendance increases were higher for girls relative to boys, although girls continue to miss more school than boys overall.

Other achievements: GFE has helped foster a positive image for the United States in Albania. During a field visit to GFE schools, the U.S. ambassador used the occasion to discuss other initiatives, including bringing back the Peace Corps. He felt that GFE was a good example of how Albania was making the kind of progress that allowed development projects to have an impact.¹⁴⁸

CARE Kukes developed a database and began tracking enrollment and attendance data on sample schools that it collected through CARE monitors. CARE reported a surge in attendance in the first 6 months after the school feeding program was introduced. That spike was followed by general declines in absences over the next months of feeding in all 64 schools. In the Kukes district, for example, Borje school averaged an 8.6-percent absentee rate for November, 1.5 percent for January, and 0.8 percent in February.¹⁴⁹ In Tropoje District, student absenteeism at one school dropped from 11.5 percent in December to 5.5 percent in January, 5 percent in February, and 4.7 percent in March.¹⁵⁰

CARE has begun its work on school infrastructure repair and improvement. In Puke, CARE delivered 258 student desks to the Board of Education in May, and another delivery was scheduled for June. CARE also awarded 15 contracts to rehabilitate 22 schools in Has, Tropoje, and Kukes. While there were minor difficulties with the construction of some of the sanitation facilities and some issues as to how the schools should be connected to the Kukes public water systems, all problems were resolved and three rehabilitation projects were completed by June 2002.¹⁵¹

Unanticipated Outcomes

- There has been such a response to the GFE program that, in many schools, attendance is outpacing the infrastructure's capacity to respond. This is particularly true in the case of the kindergartens, where attendance in individual classrooms has almost doubled, causing a shortage of desks, books, and materials for the students.¹⁵²

Building Civil Society

An unexpected outcome of the GFE focus on education is the tool it gives CARE to work with PTA's on issues of general citizen interest and responsibility like trash management and litter pickup at the schools. –Care/Albania GFE Field Director

¹⁴⁸ Op cit. CARE Executive Summary

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

- In an area of high unemployment, the purchase of locally produced food from local vendors has generated paid employment in food processing and additional income for local farmers and bakers.
- Because of the need for financial services to pay the local vendors and contractors, the one bank in the area has developed new financial services, benefiting other banking customers as well.

Lessons Learned

Any program that seeks to increase enrollment and attendance must ensure that the needs for additional classroom space, desks, staff, and educational materials are addressed. Increases in attendance will require additional infrastructure to support the increased enrollment and attendance. In the first year of GFE CARE project in Albania, the increased number of children attending school has led to an increase in the demand for kindergarten education beyond the capacity of the district schools to meet. Because there are not enough teachers and classroom space, some schools can accommodate only about 50 percent of the children wishing to attend kindergarten.¹⁵³

Another lesson learned is that the GFE food distribution system produces plastic bags that litter the hillsides of Albania.¹⁵⁴ CARE intends to introduce trash management, hygiene, and litter pickup through the PTA's as part of its civic education and work in building civil society.

Best Practices

- CARE helped strengthen PTA's at 60 of its 64 schools. The PTA's are instrumental in implementing the GFE program, promoting educational enhancement of the school facilities and providing feedback to CARE and USDA on ways to improve program impact.
- The small grants awarded to the PTA's by CARE to improve the educational environment and strengthen parental involvement with the schools are central to the GFE goal of improving educational performance.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Op cit. CARE/Albania Memorandum. June 2002.

Albania

Catholic Relief Services

Summary of Findings

The first distribution of commodities to schools began in April 2002 to supplement existing feeding programs. In the first month, the program reached 32 schools with a combined enrollment of 3,915 children. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) also awarded small grants to parent councils to repair and expand school facilities and purchase education materials. Because feeding began in April 2002, there are few documented impacts for the project, although preliminary information indicates an increase in attendance. The program is scheduled to operate until September 2003.

The Global Food for Education Program (GFE) mitigates certain economic reasons for low attendance and relieves hunger-based hindrances to classroom learning. CRS decided to build on its previously successful project with parent-school partnerships and to focus GFE interventions on kindergartens in five regions where CRS was already working, including the poorest region in the country.

Commodity Management

The agreement between CRS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was signed on July 27, 2001. CRS requested 740 metric tons of the following commodities: wheat flour, 260 tons; non-fat dry milk, 340 tons; rice, 90 tons; and vegetable oil, 50 tons.

CRS received a total of 707.19 tons of commodities. The loss occurred between the U.S. port and receipt in Albania. CRS assumes that the majority of the loss occurred during overland shipping from Greece, but it cannot verify that because there was no shipping agency representation at the Albanian border, nor were there any personnel to make visual inspections at the various ports along the way from the United States. There were significant delays in the customs clearance process in Durres, Albania, and it took more than three and one-half months to clear all of the commodities.¹⁵⁵ This delay resulted in a late start for the GFE program in Albania, meaning that CRS will have to feed during parts of two school years. However, USDA has granted an extension and sufficient commodities to complete the feeding in the additional months of April-September 2003.

The first distribution of commodities to schools began in April 2002 to supplement existing feeding programs. In the first month, the program reached 32 schools with a combined enrollment of 3,915 children in the regions of Kukes, Lezhe, Tirana, Durres, Fier, and Elbasan.

¹⁵⁵ Commodity Logistics Information Report, October 2001-March 2002. CRS/Albania.

Project Overview

Goals and objectives: CRS and its implementing partners established multiple goals and objectives for their GFE project. They proposed to carry out the following objectives to meet the overall goals of increasing enrollment, attendance, and performance, especially for girls:

- Distribute commodities to 40 kindergartens to augment the menu for the direct feeding of 4,000 students.
- Develop and/or strengthen parent-school partnerships to promote parental involvement in early childhood education.
- Repair/improve educational infrastructure including kitchens, playgrounds, and other projects through provision of small grants to kindergarten parent councils for school enhancement projects.
- Improve nutritional quality of kindergarten meals.

Implementation status: Meal delivery was delayed from September 2001 until April 2002 due to difficulties with customs and late arrival of the commodities. The meal program will continue through the entire 2002/2003 school year. During the wait for the commodities to arrive, CRS identified target kindergartens using the following criteria:

- Geographic or social connections with primary schools that were part of the existing CRS program.
- Need for food/education parent-school partnership programming.
- Inclusion on a list of needy kindergartens obtained from local education directories in each region.
- Existing kitchens.
- Access to nutritionists.
- Public rather than private status.

Based on these criteria, 33 kindergartens were chosen. CRS worked with the parents in the schools to set up parent councils, and 23 schools were chosen to participate in the parent-school partnership program. CRS held training sessions with the parents and teachers on such topics as how to plan and carry out an effective meeting and how to prepare a project proposal. Future training will include fund raising. Training has been provided in early childhood development for parents and teachers, and future topics include school maintenance and parental involvement in education and parenting skills.

CRS has also developed a small grant program for mini-projects. The mini-projects are solicited and then managed by the parent councils. Some mini-projects have already been carried out, including the purchase of playground equipment, new school materials, child-sized furniture for classrooms, kitchen supplies, small school reconstruction/renovation projects, and the setup of kindergarten libraries.

Baseline data gathered by CRS indicates that it will be servicing 3,915 children enrolled in the 32 GFE kindergartens. This number of child beneficiaries is expected to increase to

4,000 or more in September 2002 with the beginning of the new school year and the opening of the 33rd kindergarten now under reconstruction.

During the first month of GFE meal distribution, two issues arose that will need immediate attention from CRS. First, school meals are not free in Albania, so children whose parents cannot afford to pay for lunch do not benefit from the government program or from the GFE project. This means that GFE may not reach those children who need it most and for whom the incentive of a school meal would likely contribute to increased enrollment and attendance.

The other issue concerns differing taste preferences. The non-fat dry milk and vegetable oil do not appeal to Albanian palates. Sufficient fresh milk is available, and the cooking/baking practices are not suited to the use of non-fat dry milk. Potable water is not always available, which poses an additional problem when reconstituting non-fat dry milk. To resolve this issue, CRS is planning to barter the non-fat dry milk to dairies in exchange for cheese and other fresh dairy products. The dairies will combine the non-fat dry milk with fat to make frozen desserts for commercial sale.

The vegetable oil has a natural aroma and taste that are unpleasant to local preferences. The cooking properties are also different from local oils that are traditionally used, such as olive and sunflower oils. Although this led to some complaints in the beginning, recent reports show that children are getting used to the odor and taste of the oil, and this problem has been overcome in most cases.

Other donor support: The Albanian Red Cross donated blankets, kitchen sets, and soap. Teachers, school officials, and parents contribute labor and logistical support at the school sites.

Sustainability: This is a serious issue to be analyzed as the project becomes fully implemented. In its focus on improving education in Albania, the Government of Albania proposes to increase attendance through eighth grade using a variety of strategies including scholarships, textbooks, and "free food."¹⁵⁶ The efforts of parent councils facilitated by CRS represent sustainable infrastructure enhancements that will help resolve local school needs into the future. There are other aspects of this program that are sustainable beyond GFE. These include the parent and teacher training, community empowerment, infrastructure developments, and community support for education. Making the school meal accessible to the poorest children who cannot afford to pay for it should be addressed by any future school feeding program.

Monitoring and evaluation: Both USDA and CRS will be carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities during the project. USDA has hired a local monitor to survey 20 sample schools and perform local monitoring. CRS and the USDA monitor will coordinate their monitoring and evaluation efforts to avoid redundancies while ensuring independence of action. As a group, the personnel will discuss factors that could affect a

¹⁵⁶ Op cit. Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

GFE project's success and reach consensus on the factors used to develop a sample matrix. These identified factors would contribute significantly to the success or failure of any educational effort. They would also impact the administration and supervision of the project by CRS.

A matrix will be developed for all CRS schools. Twenty schools will be chosen at random from each cell. CRS has gathered baseline data on enrollment and attendance in all of its GFE kindergartens. The USDA monitor will use a questionnaire to obtain preliminary baseline data before initiating focus groups of parents for qualitative data collection.

Project Impact

Because the feeding began in April 2002, there are few documented impacts for the project. However, preliminary information indicates an increase in attendance. The parent councils at many schools have completed needs assessments and launched successful activities to improve kindergarten facilities such as playgrounds, kitchen facilities, and specific enhancements to the learning environment. Parent-teacher bonds are being strengthened as reflected in greater parental involvement.¹⁵⁷

The reaction to the vegetable oil and the non-fat dry milk was unanticipated and will be dealt with by CRS Albania to minimize any adverse impact on the project.

Lessons Learned

Perhaps the neediest children targeted by the program are being missed. The CRS GFE program is intended to enhance the nutritional quality of the menu by the purchase of additional food items, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. As a result, meal portions are bigger and more nutritionally balanced, and more meals and snacks are now provided throughout the day than was possible before GFE. However, the CRS GFE program may not reach some of the neediest children. The Government of Albania does not have a free-meal program, and some families cannot afford to participate. There may also be other reasons that children do not participate in the program, and more research is needed as to the causes of nonparticipation.¹⁵⁸

Teachers benefit from the food, too. Teachers are the keystones in the education process. The teachers often have economic and nutritional stresses similar to those of the students. Furthermore, the GFE program adds to the teachers' workloads. Opening the meal program to the teachers would enhance educational effectiveness, as well as extend good will in appreciation for the new tasks that GFE imposes on them, such as recordkeeping and reporting.

¹⁵⁷ "GFE Achievements in Albania: Notes from the Field," CRS/Albania.

¹⁵⁸ CRS/Albania notes that not all of the neediest are excluded and the reasons are complex as to why some children do not participate in the school lunch program.

People from different geographical areas often have different tastes. The non-fat dry milk and the vegetable oil are not popular with the Albanian palate. Although the rejection problems seem to be decreasing with time, CRS will continue to monitor the situation to determine if further adjustments have to be made to accommodate these differences.

As attendance increases in response to the GFE program, infrastructure can be stretched beyond its limits. Any program that seeks to increase enrollment and attendance must ensure that the needs for additional classroom space, desks, staff, and educational materials are addressed as well.

Best Practices

CRS helped strengthen parent councils in 23 schools. The parent councils are instrumental in implementing the GFE program, promoting educational enhancement of the kindergarten facilities, and providing feedback to USDA on ways to improve the impact of the program.

The small grants awarded to the parent councils by CRS to repair and expand school facilities and purchase education materials are central to the GFE goal of improving educational performance.

Next Steps

The next steps for CRS should include working with the Albanian Government to discover ways to extend the school meal program to those unable to participate because of economic barriers. USDA's next step will be to complete the data collection process to make a final assessment of the GFE project's impact on attendance and enrollment.

GFE in Action

In the kindergarten of Rreshen in the region of Lezhe, people were very excited about the donated food from CRS. The Mayor of Rreshen was the first to knock on CRS' door to express interest in participating in the GFE program for Rreshen's only kindergarten. A meeting of representatives from CRS, the municipality of Rreshen, the community, and kindergarten teachers and administrators was organized to discuss and exchange ideas about how to manage the food for the benefit of the children. Everyone thanked CRS for giving the children of Rreshen the opportunity to enjoy a more nutritious diet. When the food arrived in the kindergarten, everyone was pleased and grateful. The cook is always busy preparing new and improved meals. Parents have the opportunity to discuss the next day's meal with the teachers and the cook when they come to pick up their children.

When the CRS staff began to work with kindergartens, they realized that teachers and parents had very little information about parental involvement in education. At the same

time, teachers and parents were requesting training in early childhood development. CRS then decided to offer this training. After the parents and teachers participated in the training, things started to change in the kindergartens. Teachers approached their work with more energy and new ideas, and parents said they felt more important in the life of the kindergarten. Parents and teachers felt more united in a common cause of improving their children's school experience. In the Kavaje kindergarten (prefecture of Tirana), parents contributed toward building a playground for their youngsters. In kindergarten No.1 in Librazhd (in the region of Elbasan), parents contributed their time to assist the teacher during the school day. After the training was held, parents and teachers immediately started to make changes in the classroom environment, and teachers began using new teaching practices, based on child-centered methodology.

Albania

Mercy USA for Aid and Development

Summary of Findings

Mercy USA for Aid and Development (MUSA) has not begun direct feeding because the commodities have not arrived. Feeding is anticipated to begin in September 2002. MUSA has begun preparation, including assessment and enrollment of participating schools, contracting, hiring staff, and developing the feeding mechanisms and logistics for the food delivery. The Global Food for Education Program (GFE) monitor will begin to collect baseline data, including other donor support information, once the school selection has been finalized and the sample schools chosen. The program is scheduled to begin in September 2002 and end in March 2003.

MUSA decided to focus its GFE in the northern and central regions of the country because that is the area of greatest poverty and unemployment, including some of the poorest prefectures in the country, such as Kukes, Diber, Lezhe, and Elbasan.

Commodity Management

The requested commodities were: wheat flour, 5,000 metric tons; rice, 850 tons; and corn oil, 150 tons.

MUSA originally requested 6,000 tons to be delivered in January and February 2002. As of May 14, 2002, MUSA had not received commodities or funds, although the commodities were expected to begin arriving in mid-May. However, with school ending in mid-June, actual feeding will not begin until the start of the new school year in September 2002, continuing until June 2003. When the feeding begins, a portion of the commodities will be bartered for local foods, such as cheese, to enhance the nutrition. MUSA expects that its feeding program will reach a combined enrollment of 30,000

children in five regions (Lezha, Shkodra, Tirana, Elbasan, and Berat) in the 12 targeted districts of Kukes, Lezhe, Kurbin, Rreshen, Puke, Malesia Madhe, Vau Dejes, Tirana, Berat, Gramsh, Librazhd, and Elbasan.

Project Overview

Goals and objectives: To meet the overall goals for the GFE project of increasing enrollment, attendance, and performance, especially for girls, MUSA proposed to feed 30,000 students in the 12 districts and meet the following targets:

- Increase attendance from 41.1 percent to 60 percent.
- Reduce the dropout rate for girls from 4 percent to 2 percent.
- Increase the academic passing rate from 93.5 percent to 96.0 percent.

Implementation status: MUSA has not begun direct feeding because the commodities have not arrived. It has begun preparation, including assessment and enrollment of participating schools, contracting, hiring staff, making arrangements for bartering, and developing the feeding mechanisms and logistics for the food delivery.¹⁵⁹

Other donor support: The GFE monitor will begin to collect baseline data, which will include other donor support information, once the school selection has been finalized and the sample schools chosen.

Sustainability: This is a serious issue to be analyzed as the project becomes fully implemented. In its focus on improving education, the Government of Albania proposes to increase attendance through eighth grade using a variety of strategies including scholarships, textbooks, and food.¹⁶⁰

Monitoring and evaluation: Both the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and MUSA will be carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities during the project. USDA has hired a local monitor to collect baseline data on the sample schools and conduct the local monitoring for USDA. MUSA staff and the USDA monitor will coordinate their monitoring and evaluation efforts to avoid redundancies while ensuring independence of action. As a group, the personnel will discuss the factors that could impact a GFE project's success and reach consensus on the factors used to develop a sample matrix. These identified factors would contribute significantly to success or failure of any educational effort. They would also impact the administration and supervision of the project by MUSA.

A matrix will be developed for all MUSA schools. Twenty sample schools will be chosen at random from each cell of the matrix. The USDA monitor will use a questionnaire to obtain preliminary baseline data before initiating focus groups of parents for qualitative data collection.

¹⁵⁹ MUSA Project Status Report May 2002.

¹⁶⁰ Op cit. Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Next Steps

The next steps for MUSA include finalizing the targeted schools, working with the USDA monitor to develop the school sample and coordinate monitoring/evaluation, and carrying out all of the tasks associated with the project's implementation. Feeding begins September 2002.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Catholic Relief Services

Summary of Findings

Five million meals have been served to 34,000 students in 106 schools from October 2001 through June 2002. Preliminary information from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) indicates an increase in attendance of approximately 10 percent, and an increase of about 45 percent in the number of students who attend at least a portion of the school day. The parent-school councils launched successful activities to improve school facilities through the small grants program. Economic benefits were spawned by 16 Global Food for Education Program (GFE) contracts with local bakeries that provided the meals. These contracts allowed the bakeries to hire additional employees and in some cases expand the range of products they provided to local communities. With the project extension, the feeding program and other activities will continue from September 2002 through June 2003.

Country Overview

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country in southeast Europe with approximately three million inhabitants. Formerly part of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, the country experienced four brutal years of war between 1992-95 that caused severe destruction of the infrastructure, economy, and human lives. Although the war ended in November 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, the country is still crippled economically, politically, and socially. Huge numbers of people displaced by the war are returning to their devastated communities without necessary resources and with a general lack of social services. Unemployment was approximately 40 percent in 1999.¹⁶¹

Within this context, education is one of the areas of most promise in terms of solving problems, but it is also the area where the political and social struggles are most evident. Schools must not only cope with war-related tensions and economic stagnation, but they struggle to survive within an education system based both on a centralized social past and a decentralized post-war bureaucracy that can no longer adequately meet their needs. There is currently no effective Ministry of Education at the country level, while parallel ethnic structures in some regions (e.g., Bosniak and Croat) are making the situation even more complicated. The net result is that quality education and the future human capital of the country is compromised.

The following is a sketch of the current education system. The country is divided into two entities: the Federation, where the majority of the population is Muslim and Croat; and the Republika Srpska (RS), whose population consists mostly of Serbs. The region called Herzegovina is contiguous to Croatia and traditionally has been settled by an

¹⁶¹ www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bk.html

ethnic Croat majority. The Federation and the RS have separate Ministries of Education that rarely communicate. The RS maintains a highly centralized system inherited from Yugoslavia. The Federation is broken into 10 cantons, and most of the decisionmaking pertaining to educational issues resides at this level. Two cantons of the Federation have parallel structures, Bosniak and Croat, that implement two separate ethnically based school policies and curricula.

Eight years of primary education are mandatory. Parents are held legally accountable for sending their children to school. Children are usually enrolled in the primary school closest to their homes. In rural areas, a walk of six miles over mountainous terrain may sometimes be necessary. Secondary education is optional, but almost 90 percent of teenagers complete this level. The secondary school course of study lasts three to four years, depending on the area of specialization. The teachers rarely receive their salaries, and in general are not satisfied with their working conditions because they lack books and equipment.¹⁶² Given the socialist past of Bosnia-Herzegovina, there is no historic active involvement of the wider community in school activities and, ironically, the legacy of the recent war destroyed many schools and community relationships at the moment when their involvement is critical to developing the country.

Within this environment, CRS developed a proposal and signed a GFE agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The CRS program is designed to mitigate economic reasons for low attendance and relieve hunger-based hindrances to classroom learning, as well as to promote parent/community involvement in education. CRS began in October 2001 after identifying 106 schools out of 222 for which a thorough assessment was conducted.

Commodity Management

CRS received 24,630 metric tons of hard red winter wheat. A total of 22,000 tons was monetized, and the remainder was provided to local bakeries to prepare bread for school sandwiches and nutritional pastries. The proceeds from monetization were used to purchase ingredients, such as meat and cheese, from local sources for the sandwiches and pastries. The caloric value of each meal is 450 calories. Additionally, each meal provides 12 grams of protein, 70 grams of carbohydrates, and 15 grams of fat (27 percent of caloric intake).

Project Overview

Goals and objectives: The primary goals are to increase rates of attendance and rates of enrollment, but there are a number of additional objectives.

¹⁶² CRS/Bosnia-Herzegovina GFE Preliminary Monitoring Report, March 2002.

- Strengthen community infrastructure for addressing school improvements through the formation of parent-school councils.
- Facilitate school repairs, improvements in the learning environment, and upgrades of teaching equipment and materials.
- Increase the number of lunches served to vulnerable school children, particularly children of returned refugee families. Provide meals to a minimum of 30,000 students in at least 100 primary schools.
- Provide highly nutritional lunches in school for returned refugee students and other vulnerable students.
- Develop and strengthen school lunch parent-teacher contact groups, which monitor distribution of school lunches.
- Provide small school lunch grants to participant schools to improve the ability of parent-teacher contact groups to provide meals and improve the general learning environment.
- Provide school improvement grants to parent-school councils to improve the learning environment in accordance with needs identified by parent-school councils.
- Develop parent-school councils in schools, targeting schools with a high population of returned refugees.
- Strengthen parent-school councils by providing training in topics such as the role of the family in raising children, conflict resolution, conducting needs assessments and prioritization of needs, designing project proposals, and fund raising.

Implementation status: Meal service began in October 2001 and has continued through the school year ending June 2002. An average of more than 34,000 students were provided meals in 106 schools. More than 5 million meals were provided during the 2001-2002 school year.

Small grants for the improvement of school facilities were provided to both parent-school councils (\$12,000 limit) and the contact groups (\$2,000) through a competitive proposal process. Projects included library improvement, purchase of teaching equipment, improvement of school and recreation facilities, and landscaping to improve the educational environment. Parents and teachers regularly made in-kind contributions of labor and materials amounting to a minimum of 25 percent of the value of each small project.

In order to provide students with a high quality, nutritious lunch, CRS contacted the Office of School Nutrition at the Institute for Public Health for information on types of student lunches. Based on the findings and CRS resources, 15 different menus were created to meet both nutritional requirements and the expectations of students. CRS provided these suggested menus to potential bakeries during the tender organized for school lunch production. The ability of a bakery to cost-efficiently produce the range of menu items was one of the criteria used in the selection of the contractors. After more than six months of distribution experience, CRS reduced the menus from 15 to between five and 10, allowing the bakeries and the schools to choose the appropriate menus for the students in the program.

Regardless of the area or producer, the most frequent meals produced each week include sandwiches with cheese or salami, or chocolate or doughnuts.

The program targets more than 34,122 of the most vulnerable students using the following criteria:

- Students without one or both parents.
- Students with both parents unemployed.
- Students with special needs.
- Student returnees from refugee families.
- Students who travel more than four kilometers from home to school.

To facilitate proper implementation and foster community ownership, this project has also supported the establishment of a grassroots mechanism to ensure distribution oversight, provide regular updates of beneficiary lists, and ensure targeting of the most needy. Two mechanisms were used at the community level: contact groups and parent-school councils. Contact groups consisting of parents and teachers were formed in each of the participating 106 schools. Each group has a minimum of two teachers and two parents who, in addition to the previously mentioned activities, also work on identifying and addressing school needs with limited funds. In addition, 16 parent-school councils were formed from the more developed groups of parents and teachers who, after assessment, were determined to have the skills to contribute to the longer term, broader interests of the school. Training in small project design and management was provided for the 16 new parent-school councils.

Other donor support: Teachers, school officials, and parents contribute labor and logistical support at the school sites.

Sustainability: Parent-school councils and contact groups facilitated by CRS represent sustainable infrastructure enhancements that will be positioned to help resolve local school needs in the future.

Monitoring and evaluation: Both USDA and CRS are monitoring and evaluating this project. CRS has developed a number of monitoring and evaluation tools to collect data, including attendance forms, contact group quality forms, monitors' reports (field staff report monthly), distribution control forms, individual beneficiary reports, and waybill forms to track the transport and delivery of flour to bakeries.

USDA identified a local monitor working through a non-governmental organization who is collecting baseline data on 20 schools using a standard USDA GFE questionnaire. Additionally, stakeholders at the 20 sample schools plus an additional 30 schools are being visited to collect information on implementation and impact based on feedback from teachers, parents, students, and community members.

The following table summarizes the results of the GFE program in Bosnia-Herzegovina as of March 31, 2002.

No.	Indicator	Target (as described in original proposal)	Achievement
1	Increased number of girls and boys attending school.	5% to 10% increase above the level before the school lunch program began.	Average increase of 45% for girls and 43% for boys for sample of seven schools (6.6% of total).
2	Increased number of lunches served to vulnerable school children, particularly children of returned refugee families.	30,000 students in 100 primary schools.	As of October 2001, meal service for 34,122 students in 106 primary schools. Detailed breakdown of beneficiaries per category per month.
3	Highly nutritious lunches in school for returned refugee and other vulnerable students.	Of recommended daily requirements, lunches that provide 20% of protein, 65% of carbohydrates, and 27% of fat to 30,000 vulnerable students.	Average nutritional value provided in distributed sandwich: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protein: 15 grams (25% of daily protein requirement for children ages 7-14). • Carbohydrates: 85 gram (23% of daily requirement). • Fat: 15 grams (24% of daily requirement). These achievements represent 25% of daily requirements.
4	School lunch parent-teacher contact groups, which distribute school lunches.	100 parent-teacher contact groups above the baseline (contact groups will include in total at least 200 teachers and 200 parents).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 106 parent-teacher contact groups created; 215 parents and 257 school workers or teachers involved. • Four training sessions conducted for all contact groups, providing members basic knowledge and skills for identifying and addressing school needs.
5	Small school lunch grants to participant schools to improve the ability of parent-teacher contact groups to provide meals.	Approximately 50 school lunch grants.	132 small grants approved. Contact groups have identified many grant activities that are not directly linked to the provision of school lunches but significantly improve the school environment.
6	Parent-school councils in schools, targeting schools with a high population of returned refugees.	16 parent-school councils above the baseline.	16 parent-school councils created.
7	Parent-school councils trained in such areas as the role of family in raising children, conflict resolution, needs assessments/prioritization, project proposal design, and fund raising.	16 parent-school councils trained above baseline.	91% of training sessions conducted (56% of training sessions attended jointly by at least two different parent-school councils).
8	School improvements grants to parent-school councils to improve the learning environment in accordance with council-identified needs.	At least 16 school improvement grants above baseline.	30 school improvement grants approved and an additional 40 in preparatory phase; 45% of funding for 30 approved projects spent on infrastructure improvements.

Project Impact

- Preliminary information indicates about a 10-percent increase in classes attended, with an increase of around 45 percent in number of students who attend at least a part of the school day.
- The parent-school councils and contact groups launched successful efforts to improve school facilities, such as playgrounds, kitchen facilities, libraries, and classrooms.
- Community organizational infrastructure was strengthened through the assistance provided by the GFE project for parent-school councils and contact groups.
- Productive community relationships between teachers and parents were reinforced through the small grants program.

Unanticipated Outcomes

- The project contracted 16 local bakeries to provide the meals. The economic activity spawned by the GFE contracts allowed the bakeries to hire additional employees and, in some cases, to expand the range of products they provide to local communities.
- The economic effect of the program reached beyond student families and bakeries to include: providers of printed paper and nylon wrappers for the 5 million sandwiches; processors of meat and cheese purchased for sandwich fillings; and local producers of the meat and cheese that was supplied to the processing facilities.
- The number of students attending extracurricular activities increased an average of 7 percent for girls and 9 percent for boys, compared with comparable periods before the GFE program began. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, such activities have traditionally played an important role in schools and represent an important part of the informal education process. Many students who did not previously receive a school lunch would often leave school earlier because they were too hungry to remain and participate in activities following regular classes.

Lessons Learned

School enrollment and attendance are functions of many variables that are often interrelated in complex ways. Food alone may not yield the desired result. For food to be an effective tool, the project must be designed to address interrelated factors that will be critically important to the success of the program. This includes:

- Investing time and expertise in making the program decisionmaking process truly participatory by including the community stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- Allocating sufficient resources to strengthening and empowering the local community's organizational infrastructure.
- Making necessary repairs to physical infrastructure.

Best Practices

- Perform a detailed and rigorous situation assessment to ensure that the sociological factors that impact the intended goal of increasing attendance and enrollment are sufficiently understood prior to designing the implementation plan.
- Help develop and strengthen parent-school councils and parent-teacher contact groups. In the CRS project, these associations were instrumental in implementing the GFE program, promoting educational enhancement of the school facilities and providing feedback to USDA on ways to improve the impact of the program and reach the most vulnerable students.
- Provide small grants, as CRS did, to the parent-school councils and contact groups to repair school facilities, improve or expand facilities, and purchase education materials.

Next Steps

The next steps include collecting final data and completing impact analysis, and preparing to start the next school year.

GFE in Action

- Teachers and school nurses report a reduction in stomach aches and signs of fatigue among pupils as a result of the meal enhancements made possible through GFE.
- In addition to the school feeding for 34,122 vulnerable students who participate in the USDA GFE program, the 16 local bakeries that make the sandwiches also benefit. On average, the bakeries have reported an 18-percent increase in their overall production and a 25-percent increase in people employed as a result of participation in the GFE program.
- Another benefit to bakeries is access to wheat flour from the United States. Hard red winter grain is partial compensation for participation in the program. The ability to obtain high-quality flour is not common in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For economic reasons, bakers buy mostly lower quality flour from Hungary, Croatia, or Yugoslavia. CRS has received many positive reports about the quality of American flour, despite the fact that it is milled locally. This may pave the way for potential markets in the future.

Georgia

Counterpart International

Summary of Findings

This project will begin in fall 2002. Counterpart International (Counterpart) will provide around 35,000 daily meals to students attending 140 schools in the Kakheti and Samagrello regions of Georgia. The second major component of the program is school rehabilitation and educational materials support. In addition students and teachers will receive training in nutrition and health education. The program will continue through May 2003.

Country Overview

Georgia is located in southwestern Asia, bordering the Black Sea, Turkey, and Russia. Georgia gained independence in 1991 upon the breakup of the Soviet Union. Sixty percent of its five million people live in urban areas, and by 2015 almost 70 percent of the population is expected to live in urban areas.¹⁶³ The economy has traditionally centered on tourism around the Black Sea, which explains the 45-percent employment in the services sector.¹⁶⁴ Thirty percent of the Georgian economy is agriculture, but crops often spoil in the field because farmers cannot get their produce to market or must pay costs that drive market prices above those for imported goods.¹⁶⁵

Georgia is one of the poorest countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States.¹⁶⁶ Sixty percent of the population falls below the poverty line.¹⁶⁷ Poorly planned transition strategies, governmental and institutional corruption, an energy crisis, a deteriorating infrastructure, the inability to collect taxes, and public loss of confidence in reform measures have contributed to the current economic situation. A drought in 2002 caused declines in the agricultural sector and was further aggravated by the ongoing economic problems and unresolved ethnic conflicts. The energy crisis not only reduced access to heat but also reduced the economic growth potential for areas outside of the capital, Tbilisi.

Government spending for health, education, and welfare programs has dropped significantly, possibly suffering the most dramatic decline of the transition economies.¹⁶⁸ As the economy further deteriorates, the government is not able to invest resources into the development of its people or social safety nets. Overall, it is able to provide few

¹⁶³ U.S. Department of State, Country Profile: Georgia, 1998.

¹⁶⁴ CIA, The World Fact Book, Georgia.

¹⁶⁵ U.S. Department of State, Country Profile: Georgia, 1998.

¹⁶⁶ Joint Press Release of the World Bank, Asia Development bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the international Monetary Fund, April 2002.

¹⁶⁷ Op. cit. The World Fact Book.

¹⁶⁸ USAID Regional Overview: Georgia, 2001.

services, and its reach outside Tbilisi is very limited. The reduction of assistance to the elderly, mothers, and children has a significant impact on the everyday lives of the country's most vulnerable. Internally displaced persons, who number close to 250,000, further strain on government's ability to provide adequate assistance.¹⁶⁹

Education in Georgia consists of four levels: kindergarten, compulsory general education (grades one through nine), upper secondary (grades ten and eleven), and higher education. According to the World Bank, problems in the education sector include very low teachers salaries, deteriorated infrastructure, suspended welfare support to students, and increased cost to parents for education.¹⁷⁰ The enrollment rates in public sector institutions, historically very high (about 100 percent for compulsory general education and 75 percent for upper secondary schools), have dropped by 23 percent on average, partially offset by an increase in private school attendance.¹⁷¹

A recently conducted study reported that "the drought of 2000 did not severely impact the acute nutritional status of children; that is, the prevalence of wasting was low. Rather the drought added to the already dire situation that impacts the nutritional status of mothers, the household economic situation, and overall household food security. The long-term impact of the drought, coupled with chronic economic poverty, will lead to the decline of the health status of children in Georgia. And as their health status declines so will their ability to learn and be healthy participants in Georgia's future development."¹⁷²

It is within this social, economic, and political context that Counterpart targeted 140 schools in the Kakheti and Samagrello regions of Georgia, where the problems of malnutrition and poverty are among the most severe in the country. The program is designed to mitigate economic reasons for low attendance and relieve hunger-based hindrances to classroom learning. The Global Food for Education (GFE) program is consistent with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Georgia program to reduce human suffering. The agreement between Counterpart and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was signed April 25, 2002. To support Counterpart's GFE project, scheduled to begin in the fall of 2002, 26,600 metric tons of commodities will be shipped to Georgia.

Commodity Management

Counterpart will monetize and directly distribute 26,600 tons of commodities. The hard red winter wheat will be monetized and the proceeds used to implement the project's multiple components designed not only to increase enrollment, attendance, and performance, but also to enhance the learning environment. The following table shows donated commodities by program use, quantity, and arrival.

¹⁶⁹ Op.cit. U.S. Department of State.

¹⁷⁰ World Bank. Georgia: Recent Economic Developments and Selected Issues, 2001.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Nutritional Status of Children Less Than Five Years of Age in Six Drought-Affected Regions of Georgia: 2002-2001, page 9. The National Centers for Disease Control, Tbilisi and Save the Children/U.S. February 2002.

Commodity	Program Use	Metric Tons	Arrival
Bulgur, soy fortified	Distribution	1,000	July/August 2002
Non-fat dry milk	Distribution	100	July/August 2002
Vegetable oil, vitamin A-fortified	Distribution	500	July/August 2002
Wheat, hard red winter #2 or better)	Monetization	25,000	May/June 2002 September/October 2002
Total		26,600	

Project Overview

The program will begin in fall 2002. Counterpart will provide approximately 35,000 daily meals (one meal per child) to students attending 140 schools in the Kakheti and Samagrelo regions of Georgia. The planned daily meal will be a hot porridge made from bulgur wheat, non-fat dry milk, and vegetable oil. Locally purchased foods such as cheese, eggs, and fruits and vegetables will complement the meals. Targeted schools will include boarding schools which house orphans and children who no longer have any means of support. A hot, nutritious meal will benefit the health of children and will encourage the students to stay in school.

Support for school rehabilitation and educational materials is another component of the Counterpart GFE program. Of total proceeds from monetization sales, 31 percent will be used to support school infrastructure repairs and the purchase of school supplies. Counterpart will subcontract crews to repair school infrastructure, such as leaking roofs or broken windows. Counterpart will also make improvements to the school cafeteria/kitchen and basic sanitation infrastructure, such as installation of hot water taps and provision of sanitary water wells and natural gas bottles for cooking.

Counterpart will purchase and distribute locally produced supplies, such as pens, paper, and notebooks to targeted schools. Schools will first be assessed to determine need, and supplies will be distributed during the first few weeks of each semester.

Counterpart will use 5 percent of sales proceeds to implement a health education program. Staff and students in the targeted feeding programs will receive training on nutrition and healthy behaviors. Activities may include the distribution of educational posters and brochures, lessons for the school curriculum, role-playing exercises, contests, and theatre. Targeting the female population, Counterpart will work to increase local knowledge and promote behaviors directly related to food security and health. Each participant will receive about four hours of instruction per month on such topics as basic nutrition, sanitation, and healthy practices. Key themes will include how to identify nutritious foods, how to cook foods to retain vitamins, and how to ensure that the diet supplies needed protein in ways consistent with local tastes and customs.

This project is scheduled to start in fall 2002.

Georgia International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc.

Summary of Findings

Meals were delivered daily to 14,000 school children from October 2001-June 2002. Enrollment and attendance data for the year is currently being analyzed. Teachers and parents noticed students' increased sense of confidence, greater class participation, and better attitudes toward learning. The educational component was delayed until the second semester because of a shortfall in commodity sales. Sales were hampered by the availability of smuggled wheat in the market. An extension is planned, and the program will continue until April 2003.

Commodity Management

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc., (IOCC) received shipment of and subsequently monetized 10,800 metric tons of hard red winter wheat. Proceeds were used to implement the project's multiple components designed not only to increase enrollment, attendance, and performance, but also to enhance the learning environment.

IOCC-imported wheat grains are among the types used and preferred locally. Clients were pleased with the quality and usually milled the grain for sale as flour. In spite of the positive response to the U.S. wheat, the program was hindered by slow sales. Buyers reported that markets were oversupplied with wheat flour that had been smuggled into the country, making legitimate sales uncompetitive. As a result, the school supplies distribution component was cancelled, and implementation of the educational component was delayed until the second semester.

Approximately 59 percent of the monetization proceeds went to cover the cost of contracts with local bakeries and food companies to prepare and deliver school lunches. Meals consisted of cheese bread, bean pie, and sweet buns. All foods were wrapped in plastic bags with printed messages related to IOCC's health, environmental, and civic education program.

Project Overview

The IOCC GFE school feeding program, which began in October 2001, just completed its first academic year. It has two components: food distribution to 14,000 vulnerable school children, and educational resource support to schools. Target schools were identified in the vulnerable regions of Tbilisi, southern Georgia, and western Georgia. IOCC also gave priority consideration to the often-improvised schools established for children of internally displaced persons, one of the most vulnerable groups in Georgia.

IOCC has worked closely with the Georgian Ministry of Education in all aspects of project design and implementation. The ministry suggested interventions to IOCC to support the educational needs of students and teachers and provided data that identified the most vulnerable schools in each of the targeted regions. The table below shows the number of GFE target schools and beneficiaries by region.

Number of Schools and Beneficiaries by Region IOCC/GFE Program March 2002		
Region	Schools	Beneficiaries
Tbilisi	16	6,607
Western Georgia	28	4,033
Southern Georgia	11	4,018
Total Schools/Beneficiaries	55	14,658

Direct feeding: Meal distribution proceeded smoothly. Menus consist of the following locally produced items: khachapuri imeruli (cheese bread); khachapuri penovani (a cheese pastry); lobiani (bean pie); qada (similar to imeruli, it has a sweet filling instead of cheese); and buns. Milk is served twice a week, and juice three times a week. The meals were designed by local dieticians and each meal, valued at approximately \$0.43, provides 35 percent of the daily calories, 50 percent of the daily protein, and 35 percent of the daily calcium needs of children. Milk and juice are packaged in Georgia by two local factories, using Tetra Pak materials printed in Turkey.

Educational support component: The educational component of the program began at the start of the second semester in January 2002. *The Adventures of Tiko and Niko*, a 64-page illustrated sticker book printed by IOCC in both Georgian- and Russian-language editions, was developed in cooperation with the Center for Civic and Environmental Education, a Georgian non-governmental organization (NGO). The organization, which came highly recommended by the Ministry of Education, has experience working with donor organizations in the fields of health, environmental, and civic education.

Children learn about health, the environment, and civic education by matching the printed sticker, which they receive with their daily meal, to the illustrations in the book. This exercise becomes a teaching topic for the class. Prior to the distribution of the workbooks, teachers were given guidance regarding their role in implementation.

As this activity progressed, teachers in a number of schools in southern Georgia became concerned about their participation in this exercise. A few teachers at first refused to participate, claiming there was not enough class time to introduce new material. Other teachers were concerned about the distribution of the educational materials to first- and second-grade students, claiming students ages 6 and 7 do not yet fully understand Russian, nor is Georgian the commonly used language in the region. However, with the support of the local branches of the Ministry of Education, all these concerns were addressed.

Tests were administered in October and November 2001 to approximately 5 percent of the total number of children in GFE schools in Tbilisi and in southern and western Georgia. The test assessed their existing knowledge regarding health, environmental, and civic education issues prior to the implementation of the educational component. The tests were retaken at the end of the academic year. This will provide a basis for analysis, although one semester is a very short period to evaluate.

Posters featuring the booklet characters and illustrations related to health, environmental, and civic education topics were printed in both Russian and Georgian and distributed to all participating schools. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), IOCC, and Georgian Ministry of Education logos appeared on the poster.

Other donor support: Teachers, school officials, and parents will contribute labor and logistical support at the school sites.

Sustainability: IOCC has worked closely with the Ministry of Education in the implementation of this program.

Monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring and evaluation is the responsibility of both IOCC and USDA. USDA hired a local monitor to administer a questionnaire designed for statistical analysis of the project impact, as well as to interview stakeholders at 20 sample schools. However, the local monitor was not officially hired until June 2002 and has not been able to gather data yet. Data collection and general project review will begin when schools open in the fall.

To select the 20 sample schools, a matrix was developed that grouped schools according to geography, urban/rural location, and size of school. These criteria offered the best opportunity to examine potential differences in project implementation and impact.

IOCC monitors visit each school to ensure that forms are properly completed, children are receiving meals, and quality is maintained. Participating bakeries are monitored at least weekly. At the bakeries, monitors check for discrepancies in the records, inspect the facility for general cleanliness, conduct a physical count of stock on hand, and check the quality of the products.

Project Impact

Teachers, school directors, and parents stress the importance of the program for both parents and children. Through focus group sessions and interviews, various participants mentioned that many families, because of high unemployment, cannot afford to provide healthy meals for their children. People in rural areas especially have limited knowledge of the importance of nutrition to a healthy life, and even if they wanted to apply this knowledge, they cannot act on it because of limited financial resources.

Enrollment: IOCC is conducting an analysis of enrollment increases.

Attendance: IOCC is conducting an analysis of attendance. Participants report that student attendance has improved. Parents send their children to school, even on days when they otherwise would not have, because they know that the meal the child receives at school may be more nutritious than the one available at home. The majority of teachers understand the importance of the school feeding program because it provides children with a portion of the necessary daily required nutrients, and they see the link between the food and its effects on the children's concentration, energy, and self-esteem. Children are more eager to come to school, and they welcome the opportunity to eat together with their peers without paying any attention to their social status.

Performance: It is difficult to assess whether or not the performance rate of children was affected because of the short period of operation. However, many teachers, school officials, and parents pointed to various indicators of improved performance, including the following:

- Increased sense of confidence.
- Increased class participation.
- Increased understanding of health, environmental, and civic education issues.
- Increased concentration.
- Better attitudes toward learning.

Special emphasis on girls: IOCC is conducting an analysis of the impact of the feeding program on girls' attendance.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons are provisional, pending complete analysis.

The lead time necessary to get commodities delivered to a country and monetized is longer than anticipated in most cases. In addition, changes in local market conditions between the time when the project is designed and the time of actual commodity delivery can affect monetization sales.

Nutrition and household economic issues that can be mitigated by school meals are not the only factors that must be addressed if the goal is to increase attendance and enrollment and improve classroom performance.

Next Steps

The next steps include completing data collection for impact analysis and other reporting requirements. Also, IOCC will consider recommendations from participants to provide meals to the teachers involved in the program and, if possible, to include the fifth and sixth grade classes in the feeding program.

GFE in Action

Tamuna Tiginashvili is a third grade student from Vashlijvari IDP School in Tbilisi. She lives with her mother, grandparents, and an uncle. Her mother and grandparents are unemployed, and her uncle is a minibus driver. Her father left the family and is supposedly living in Russia. Tamuna says that the school feeding program has helped her to learn better. Of all the meals served, she likes khachapuri penovani (flaky, layered cheese pie) and juice the best. She also enjoys the booklet and says she has learned many things that she did not know before. Her family is also very satisfied and happy with the program. Tamuna says she hopes to someday become a television talk show host.

Diana Nakopia is a second grade student, also from Vashlijvari IDP School in Tbilisi. She lives with her mother, father, and brother. Neither of her parents is currently employed. She says she loves to come to school and, of all of the meals served, she really likes the bun with milk. She says that the booklet provided in the educational component of the program helps her to get along better with other children. Both she and her parents are very happy and hope that the program will be extended into the next academic year. Diana would like to someday become a dancer.

Many parents report that they are unable to properly feed their children at home. In some cases, there is no breakfast, or breakfast is limited to bread and tea. For others, coming up with lunch money for their children every day is quite a challenge. Even for those who have less difficulty providing for their families, the fact that someone is doing something for the children on such a scale is greatly appreciated.

Moldova

International Partnership for Human Development

Summary of Findings

In five months, 23 million hot meals were provided to 266,000 students. The program has generated an estimated \$771,196 in local in-kind contributions. School enrollment was already at a high level in Moldova, and the data collected does not indicate an increase. However, students report that they enjoy school more since the meals began, and enrollment at the kindergarten level has increased since the start of the program. Teachers report that the attention and energy levels of the children have improved. The pasta factory contracted under the Global Food for Education Program (GFE) has added 67 full-time employees as a result of the business the GFE program has brought to the company. The program is scheduled to continue through December 2003.

Country Overview

One of Europe's poorest nations, Moldova ranks 98th on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index.¹⁷³ Formerly ruled by Romania, Moldova became part of the Soviet Union at the close of World War II, and has been independent since 1991. Russian forces have remained on Moldovan territory east of the Nistru River, supporting the Slavic majority population—mostly Ukrainians and Russians who have proclaimed a “Transnistria” republic. This region is the country's most heavily industrialized region. Economic conditions and poverty are now much worse in this enclave than in the rest of the country. With this area in dispute, it is difficult for Moldova to realize its potential as a market-oriented economy. Moldova became the first former Soviet state to elect a Communist as its president in 2001.

With a favorable climate and good farmland, 40 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) comes from agriculture, including fruits, vegetables, wine, and tobacco. Moldova's best-known product comes from its extensive and well-developed vineyards, which are concentrated in the central and southern regions. In addition to world class wine, Moldova produces liqueurs and champagne and is known for its sunflower seeds, plums, peaches, apples, and other fruits.

Moldova must import all of its supplies of oil, coal, and natural gas, largely from Russia. Energy shortages contributed to sharp production declines after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Any breakdown in trade has a serious effect, exacerbated at times by drought and civil conflict. After the Russian ruble devaluation of 1998, Moldova's economy underwent a prolonged recession from which it is only now beginning to emerge. There was an 8.6-percent drop in GDP. In 1999, GDP fell by 4.4 percent, the

¹⁷³ www.undp.org/hdr2001/indicator/cty_f_MDA.html.

fifth drop in the past seven years. Exports were down, and energy supplies continued to be erratic. GDP declined slightly in 2000, with a serious drought hurting agriculture. Census data from 1999 reported that 75 percent of the Moldovan population lives below the poverty line.¹⁷⁴

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) statistics indicate that 10 percent of children in Moldova suffer from moderate to severe stunting caused by malnutrition.¹⁷⁵ The literacy rate is 96 percent.¹⁷⁶ Prior to 1991, all Moldovan schools provided children with a daily glass of milk, and many offered a midday meal. Since independence, the milk and school lunch programs have disappeared because of lack of funding. The lack of a school lunch is felt mostly in rural schools where poverty is most severe.

The school buildings and physical infrastructure for education are in severe disrepair. Heating systems are inadequate, and roofs and windows need repair. As a result, the absentee rate in winter months is high. Water and septic systems at schools are often inadequate. Teaching equipment is worn and inadequate, and parents must often buy the books. In addition to being the leading cause for hunger among the students, poverty exacerbates the educational problems. Education is highly valued in Moldova, and attendance is generally good except in winter months when the physical adversities are especially challenging.

Moldova has 790,000 students at all levels of education, of which 335,000 are enrolled in primary education. Another 135,000-150,000 children are in preschools and kindergartens.¹⁷⁷

The International Partnership for Human Development (IPHD) designed a GFE project to mitigate hunger-based hindrances to classroom learning. The agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and IPHD was signed in July 2001.

Commodity Management

Under the GFE program, IPHD received a total of 28,400 metric tons of commodities. This included 16,400 tons of wheat (bread flour), 6,000 tons of rice (1,500 tons of long grain rice and 4,500 tons of medium grain), 2,250 tons of corn-soy blend, 1,500 tons of vegetable oil, and 2,250 tons of corn-soy milk.

The wheat flour was made into pasta at a local manufacturing facility, with services paid in-kind with flour. The long grain rice was monetized. The vegetable oil, medium grain rice, corn-soy blend, and corn-soy milk were distributed directly for meal preparation.

¹⁷⁴ www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/md.html.

¹⁷⁵ www.unicef.org/statis/Country_1Page124.html.

¹⁷⁶ www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5357.htm.

¹⁷⁷ IPHD Logistics Report May 2002.

Project Overview

Goals and objectives: The goals of the IPHD GFE project are to increase attendance and enrollment, and improve classroom performance. The specific objectives are to provide meals to 300,000 preschool and school-age students in 1,250 schools, targeting the poorest sector of the population; and to upgrade kitchen utensils.

Implementation status: The project began in January 2002, a delay from its intended start date of September 2001. Nevertheless, the project has met 89 percent of its goal to feed 300,000 children in 1,250 institutions. IPHD has provided a total of 23 million hot meals to 266,000 students in 2,400 schools and pre-schools/kindergartens. The meal program will continue during the summer months at a reduced target of 10,000 kindergarten pupils, and the full program will be renewed at the start of the school year in September. The current program will end in December 2002.

Because it is the largest, most extensive program of this kind in Moldova, the GFE program plays a unique role in setting a pattern for community collaboration. In a country of very limited resources, food security is a concern for a large segment of the population. The activities associated with the process of feeding the youngest citizens of the nation have generated cooperation and inspired local initiatives.

Local governments enthusiastically support the GFE program, making changes in staff and budgets to facilitate the rapid startup of the school meal program. Many schools have reopened kitchens closed since independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991. Civic leadership has been energized to respond with in-kind contributions. Regional councils, schools, and individuals have sent letters of appreciation. Children are coming to school anticipating USDA-sponsored food.

Other donor support: In four months, the program has generated an estimated \$771,196 in in-kind contributions in local funds.¹⁷⁸ This large local contribution is a measure of the acceptance of the program at the local and district levels.

Sustainability: Economic conditions most likely will not permit the national and local governments to underwrite the program in the future. However, there is an upsurge in local participation.

Monitoring and evaluation: Both IPHD and USDA are carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities. IPHD routinely monitors the process, beginning with the unloading of commodities at warehouses. Monitoring forms were developed for field use: (1) for the initial needs assessment visits, which began in October 2001 before the foods arrived; (2) for checking food use; and (3) for schools to provide IPHD with a concise and consistent ongoing record of the program. In the five months since November 2001, IPHD's seven monitors have made more than 3,300 visits to schools. They also held regional forums with educators, monitored the delivery at the warehouses, addressed localized concerns, held press conferences, and met with local governments to sign

¹⁷⁸ IPHD Monitoring and Evaluation Report June 2002.

agreements. These agreements are written and signed with every school director or mayor responsible for schools participating in the GFE program.

Within Moldova, a monitor from a local private voluntary organization, ADSISTO, collects evaluation data for USDA. Using the standard GFE questionnaire, baseline data has been gathered on 20 sample schools. These schools were selected randomly from a matrix of factors selected after discussions with IPHD.

Project Impact

In five months, 23 million hot meals were provided to 266,000 students.

Enrollment: Moldova already had a high enrollment for education, and USDA data did not show an increase in enrollment. However, monitors did report the following:

- In the primary grades, attendance and enrollment are traditionally high and the effect of feeding on these variables is not so visible. However, a final assessment will be based on a close analysis of records and data at project end.
- Students report that they like school better since meals are provided.
- Enrollment at the kindergarten level has visibly increased since the start of the meal program.
- Many parents with children at kindergarten age prefer to keep them at home. GFE provided the opportunity to improve feeding while reducing fees for parents. As a result, more parents are enrolling their children.
- The program is well received and recognized by the parents as having significant benefit for them. This is evidenced by the fact that summer-run kindergartens are opening and requesting inclusion in the program.

Attendance: Data is being collected, but observations so far include the following:

- Teachers report fewer complaints about stomach aches among students since the start of the meal program.
- A good feeding program makes schools more pleasant, attractive, and enjoyable for children, which contributes to keeping children in schools;
- In primary schools (children ages 7-11), enrollment and attendance are traditionally high, and the feeding effect is not so visible. The parents' attitude is that children should go to school, especially at that age. Later, when teens are able to earn an income, they are absent from school while involved in household and farming commitments.

Performance: Teachers report that the attention and energy levels of students have improved since the introduction of the meal program.

Teachers and school officials report that since the start of the meal program, participation in after-school activities has increased in theater, dance, and other extra-curricular activities.

Special emphasis on girls: There is no disparity between girls and boys in school attendance. Education is a high priority for children of both genders. A definitive analysis of project impact will be completed at the project's conclusion.

Unanticipated Outcomes

- The pasta factory in Moldova, contracted under the GFE program to turn 6,300 tons of flour into 3,000 tons of pasta, has added 67 full-time employees as a result of the business the GFE program has brought to the company. This is a significant, positive economic impact for the program.
- Infrastructure improvements organized as a result of GFE include the rebuilding of school lunchroom facilities, the expansion and upgrading of regional and local food storage capacity, and the development of local commodity infrastructure to supplement the GFE subsidies.
- In some cases, an increase in student enrollment, especially in kindergartens, has exceeded teacher capacity and other educational resources of the schools.
- The positive impact on the school atmosphere and student performance has prompted several local communities to seek ways to continue providing meals after the IPHD GFE program closes.

Lessons Learned

- The poorest in Moldova cannot and do not attend school. They do not have suitable clothes. The GFE program is missing children with the greatest need.
- Schools that were too poor to finance the extensive repairs needed to put their kitchens into service were not able to participate in the program. In a few cases, there have been creative solutions, such as the case where arrangements were made by the community to use the canteen next to the school.
- In the poorer schools where resources are not available to purchase non-GFE food items to supplement the menu, meals of rice and pasta are considered monotonous and nutritionally incomplete.
- In rural areas, families tend to own land where they produce vegetables and livestock products to provide food for the table or income. In urban areas, unemployed parents do not have this option.
- The program works better when school officials and community members, especially parents, are given a voice and role in planning and decision making.
- Cooks are not familiar with corn-soy meal, and this commodity has not fit well in traditional recipes. However, IPHD has developed and distributed an 18-page recipe book and provided numerous demonstrations on how to prepare the recipes.
- In some cases, municipalities were unable to obtain the necessary sanitation certificate for the school kitchen because they do not have piped potable water. Allocation of GFE resources for such improvements would make the meal program more accessible.

Next Steps

Next steps include:

- Continue warehousing the commodities pending the start of school in September.
- Arrange for summer feeding activities.
- Establish/confirm agreements with participating schools for feeding continuation at the beginning of the new school year in September.

GFE in Action

Teachers and other school officials appreciate the GFE resources. Teachers and school nurses report a reduction in complaints of stomach aches and signs of tiredness among students as a result of the meal enhancements made possible through GFE.

By providing food, the GFE program is helping poor families and poor villages. One example can be found in Talmaza, a village of 7,000 in the south of Moldova and a GFE implementation site. Talmaza formerly had five kindergartens, but only three survive because of economic hardships. Even these kindergartens do not function year-round because local authorities cannot afford to heat the buildings in winter. Carolina lives in Talmaza and is kindergarten age. Her mother used to work as a cook and her father as a tractor driver. However, when the collective farm was split among fellow villagers, Carolina's parents were left without land or permanent jobs. They now work for other landowners at the equivalent of less than \$1.50 each per day. This means insufficient food, inadequate clothing (especially in winter months), and economic obstacles to attending kindergarten. The GFE program provides food and helps mitigate the economic hardships within Talmaza and other villages like it.