



Impact evaluation of school feeding programmes in Lao People's Democratic Republic

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Abstract	Despite the popularity and widespread implementation of school feeding programmes, evidence of their impact on school participation and nutritional status is mixed. In this study we evaluate feeding programmes in three districts of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Feeding modalities included on-site feeding, take-home rations, and a combined modality. District-level implementation of the intervention sites and selective take-up presented considerable evaluation challenges. To address these, we use difference-in-difference estimators with propensity-score weighting to construct plausible counterfactuals. We find minimal evidence that school feeding increased enrolment or improved nutritional status. Several robustness checks and possible explanations for null findings are presented.
Gender Connection	Gender Informed Analysis
Gender Outcomes	Gender disaggregated school enrollment, nutrition
IE Design	Propensity Score Matching, Difference in Difference
Intervention	The World Food Program originally provided daily snack from corn-soya blend and take home rations of canned fish and rice for girls and for informal boarders to encourage enrollment and continued attendance. In 2006 the WFP expanded their feeding scheme to 7 additional districts. In the end take home rations were provided to both girls and boys with a separate additional ration for take home boarders.
Intervention Period	2006-2008; the program provided a daily snack and take home rations
Sample population	The sample comes from a longitudinal survey of approximately 4500 households with school aged children in rural villages in four districts of northern Laos. The households were randomly selected using a multi-stage probability sampling scheme. The sample used from this study is restricted to children aged 3-14 living in villages with schools, totaling 10748 children in 2006 and 9810 children in 2008.
Comparison conditions	Children living in districts with the feeding scheme are compared with similar children in districts without the feeding scheme.
Unit of analysis	Child level
Evaluation Period	2006-2008



Results	The program does not have an impact on school enrollment. Some of the specifications presented show that the program leads to earlier school entry. When looking at school feeding as a continuous variable, the impact on enrollment is actually negative. The program has no impact on nutritional status.
Primary study limitations	There are significant difference between baseline means of control and treatment districts.
Funding Source	World Food Program, World Bank Research Committee
Reference(s)	Buttenheim, Alison, Harold Alderman, and Jed Friedman. "Impact evaluation of school feeding programs in Lao PDR." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper Series No. 5518, Vol (2011).
Link to Studies	https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/3291/WPS5518.pdf?sequence=1
Microdata	