

WFP assists school feeding programme

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) recently launched a School Feeding programme in Panchagarh district covering more than 140,000 primary school students, with assistance from the Government of Australia. The programme will provide children with a daily micro-nutrient fortified ration in the form of High Energy Biscuits (HEB).

The objectives of the School Feeding programme are to increase school enrolment and attendance, improve the attention span and learning capacity of students by alleviating short-term hunger, and support the alleviation of micronutrient deficiencies. The School Feeding programme in Panchagarh is being undertaken in close collaboration with the Unicef Ideal project, says a Press release.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner, Deputy Director of Primary Education, Rajshahi Division, Md. Abdul Latif and Australian High Commissioner, Ms. Lorraine Barker, WFP Representative Douglas Casson Coutts, and James Jennings, Chief Child Development and Education, Unicef were among the key note speakers inaugurating the School Feeding Programme in Goleha Government Primary School of Kamat Kajaldigi Union, Safar Thana Panchagarh.

Since its launch in 2001, as a pilot School Feeding project for 225,000 school children in flood-damaged south-western Bangladesh, the WFP Bangladesh School Feeding programme has become one of the largest School Feeding programmes in the world, with nearly 1.2 million primary

school children in Bangladesh. The programme now also covers children in the urban slums of Dhaka, and in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

WFP has allocated a total of 160,000 metric tons of wheat to run the School Feeding programme until 2004. More than 200 million food rations will be locally produced and distributed daily to each student attending school, at a daily cost of 7 US cents per child. The Government of Australia continues to be one of the main contributing donors to the School Feeding and other WFP assisted programmes in Bangladesh.

WFP's works in food and nutrition-insecure areas, where educational problems are exacerbated by extreme poverty, severe food shortage at the household level, and hunger and poor health of children. Many of the children living in these areas are considered "ultra-poor" living on a diet under 1,800 Kcal a day and deficient in energy, protein and micronutrients. It is also recognised that the lowest levels of academic achievement and performance fall heavily on children from poor and ultra poor households.

WFP is the United Nations' front-line agency in the fight against global hunger. In 2001 WFP fed more than 73 million people in 84 countries including most of the world's refugees and internally displaced people.

WFP Global School Feeding Campaign— As the largest provider of nutritious meals to poor school children, WFP has launched a global campaign aimed at ensuring the world's 300 million undernourished children are educated.