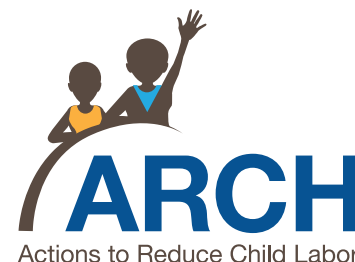




ARCH SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM BOOSTS STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION AT GWEKPOLOSUE



Students at Gwekpolosue eating their school lunch.

The Gwekpolosue Public School, located in Liberia's Kakata District, Margibi County, has experienced a boost in enrollment due to the Winrock ARCH School Feeding Program. This primary-level school, situated on the Bong Mines-Kakata highway, has a total enrollment of about 200 students on record.

However, before ARCH's involvement, the daily attendance record was anywhere from 120 to 140 students, meaning that only 60 or 70 percent of enrolled students were attending school on a regular basis. After ARCH initiated the School Feeding Program, the majority of children who had not been attending school on a regular basis began attending regularly. In addition, those remaining children who were not in school began to put extra pressure on their parents to send them to school. As a result of this program, school attendance has increased to 99 to 100 percent of total enrollment on a regular basis. Most children within this school are now engaging in recreational activities in addition to attending school, whereas before many children lacked the energy necessary to do so.

"Our classrooms are getting flooded with students every day, and it is all because of the feeding on campus," says James Waka, the school principal. "Most of the students now stay here until the last bell rings."

The introduction of the School Feeding Program, as well as the awareness raised around child labor, has

led to increased school retention and active learning, as well as an observed decrease in children engaging in hazardous labor.

Children who live in the community often do not have the opportunity to go to school due to economic hardship faced by their families. Many parents who cannot bring in enough income to feed the whole family rely on their children either to contribute by working on the farm or to find their own food. But since school authorities made the policy that the food is only available to children who attend school for the entire day, children have a greater incentive to start attending school again.

“The school feeding program has boosted our daily attendance and retention of children in school,” says Waka. He lauded the Winrock ARCH project for the initiative taken to feed the students on campus.

In order to ensure the sustainability of this program, the CDA and Ministry of Agriculture will continue to facilitate trainings for producer groups that will supply the food for the program. The Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) of the schools have been trained

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JAMES WAKA, SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

to give support in the areas of safety, storage and management of the food for the children. The PTA at the Gwekpolosue Public School has been providing routine monitoring of the daily cooking activities and has established a school garden to provide inputs for the sustainability of the program.

The Gwekpolosue Public School is among 21 public schools in Todee District, Montserrado County and Kakata District, Margibi County that are currently benefiting from the Winrock ARCH School Feeding Program. Thus far, more than 6,033 students have benefited from this program within these schools.

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