



Until we are all equal



As part of a school feeding program in Sierra Leone, children line up to get their lunch.

# Integrated School Feeding Program (ISFP)

In Sierra Leone, Plan International's Integrated School Feeding Program is more than just a meal; it's a lifeline for thousands of children. With your support, we're nourishing young minds and helping the next generation reach for a brighter future.

## PROJECT FACTS

**WHAT:** The Integrated School Feeding Program works to eliminate one of the key barriers to education: hunger. It provides children with one school meal per day so that they can stay in school and learn better.

**HOW:** The program seeks to ensure that primary-school children in Sierra Leone receive nutritious and free school meals. These meals are carefully designed to meet the nutritional needs of growing children, ensuring they have the energy and focus to engage effectively in their studies. The preparation and distribution of these meals involve individuals within these communities. School meals act as an incentive for families to keep their children in school when they might otherwise pull them out during harder times to assist with tasks at home, help earn an income or save the costs associated with school. By providing regular meals, ISFP addresses hunger and also encourages school attendance and completion, ultimately breaking the cycle of poverty and improving the prospects of a brighter future for thousands of children.

**WHERE:** Six regions of Sierra Leone, including Bombali, Kailahun, Bo, Port Loko, Western Rural Area and Moyamba

**WHEN:** Four phases of this project were completed between January 2021 and July 2023.

**WHO:** Our partners include the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and individual Canadian donors.



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## The First Word

With your support, we're feeding dreams and shaping futures.

In Sierra Leone, malnutrition is a significant threat to children's health: 26% of children under age five are stunted in their growth, a major effect of chronic malnutrition. And when students go hungry, girls especially, they miss school. The Integrated School Feeding Program (ISFP), an initiative that offers free daily meals to children in primary schools across six districts in the country, has been a transformative force in the lives of children in Sierra Leone. By providing nourishment, ISFP helps support children and their families, making it easier for children to stay in school and complete their education.

We're thrilled to announce the successful completion of Phase 4 of this project, thanks to your support. In addition to providing school meals, in March 2023 we established eight thriving school gardens that provide students with a variety of nutritious vegetables. We also trained 16 local caretakers in farming practices to help ensure that the community is involved and engaged in sustaining the program.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Your help has been instrumental in making this impactful initiative a reality. Thanks to your commitment, we're one step closer to eliminating hunger as a barrier to education and ensuring that every child has a chance to thrive. Thank you for making a lasting impact in the lives of children in Sierra Leone.

Radiant smiles like the one of this schoolgirl are a sweet reward of the school feeding program in Sierra Leone.



In this report, you'll meet three students whose lives have been transformed through the Integrated School Feeding Program. Kadiatu's journey from hunger to hope, Ola's academic progress after conquering hunger and Haja's resilience in the face of adversity demonstrate the profound effect of your support. Your commitment has not only helped alleviate hunger but also nurtured hope, ensuring these children have a brighter future ahead.

Thank you for your continued support.

# The Situation

In Sierra Leone, millions are facing food shortages.

While its decade-long civil war may have ended in 2002, Sierra Leone continues to feel its effects. The country is plagued by high unemployment, a fragile democracy and poverty, as well as the effects of climate change, particularly severe droughts.

And like in many other places around the world, the rising cost of living has caused additional challenges. Prices for commodities like cooking oil and a local staple called gari (a flour made from cassava root that is rich in minerals and fibre) have been rising. Inflation has particularly affected families who were already struggling to put food on the table.

In Sierra Leone, 57% of people are food insecure. That means more than 4 million people lack regular access to safe and nutritious food. This creates a significant hurdle for children who want to attend school, as many families can't afford the associated costs or they need to keep children home to help during harvest season. But there's a bright spot in all of this: School feeding programs make a big difference, and when children can get one good meal at school every day, it helps keep them in class and improves their academic performance. It especially helps children whose families may be struggling financially.

"This program isn't just about food," says Andrew Iraguha, team leader for the Integrated School Feeding Program with

Plan International in Sierra Leone. "It's about giving children the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty through education. They're motivated to attend school, and their health is improving."

Thanks to your support, we're working to help make things better for children in Sierra Leone. Your contributions have helped change lives and given children a chance to learn and grow.



Schoolchildren in Sierra Leone queue up for their daily school meal.

# The Rundown

Unlocking potential, one meal at a time.

- In Phase 4 (November 2022–July 2023), we served **31,586,067** plates of nutritious meals to schoolchildren, improving their learning and promoting their health and well-being. The school meals are prepared using essential commodities such as rice, gari, beans, vegetable oil and salt, ensuring a balanced and healthy diet for the students.

- A total of **299,360** children benefited from our school feeding program in Phase 4, with **151,182 girls** and **148,448 boys** enjoying regular access to nutritious meals.

- In Phase 4, **8** thriving school gardens were established to provide students with fresh vegetables, and **16** caretakers were trained in sustainable farming practices.

- We partnered with **1,342** schools across six districts to provide children with the support they need.



Community spirit in action: Women prepare nutritious meals for the Integrated School Feeding Program.

“There is excitement now from having food every day.”

– Andrew Iraguha, team leader with Plan International in Sierra Leone

## A STORY OF CHANGE

# From Hardship to Hope

One school meal a day turned Haja’s struggles into triumph.

Meet Haja, an 11-year-old girl in Sierra Leone. Her day starts at 5 a.m., when she begins tending to household chores, fetching water and caring for her brother and her uncle, who has visual and mobility impairments.

Although Haja’s help at home is critical, her grandmother recognizes the importance of education, and she has insisted that Haja go to school. Due to gaps in her learning, Haja wasn’t able to join the same grade as other children her age, but that didn’t deter her. Haja agreed to join Class 3 instead of Class 6 so that she could continue to learn.

The daily meal she receives at school, provided by the Integrated School Feeding Program, makes a big difference in what Haja can take away from her classes each day – and how she feels at home. She says she wakes up with more energy now than she used to.

Her teacher has also seen improvements in her school performance. No longer distracted by hunger, Haja now actively participates in class discussions. She’s also happier. Despite her challenging circumstances, Haja brings a positive attitude to class and encourages other children to stay in school.

Haja’s inspiring perseverance is a shining example of the positive change your commitment brings to the lives of children by supporting programs like this one.



“I used to be worried about food all the time, but now with the school feeding program, I can focus on my studies and my future.”

– Haja, 11

Haja could turn her attention to learning when the school meals program removed the distraction of hunger.

A STORY OF CHANGE

# Rising Above Hunger

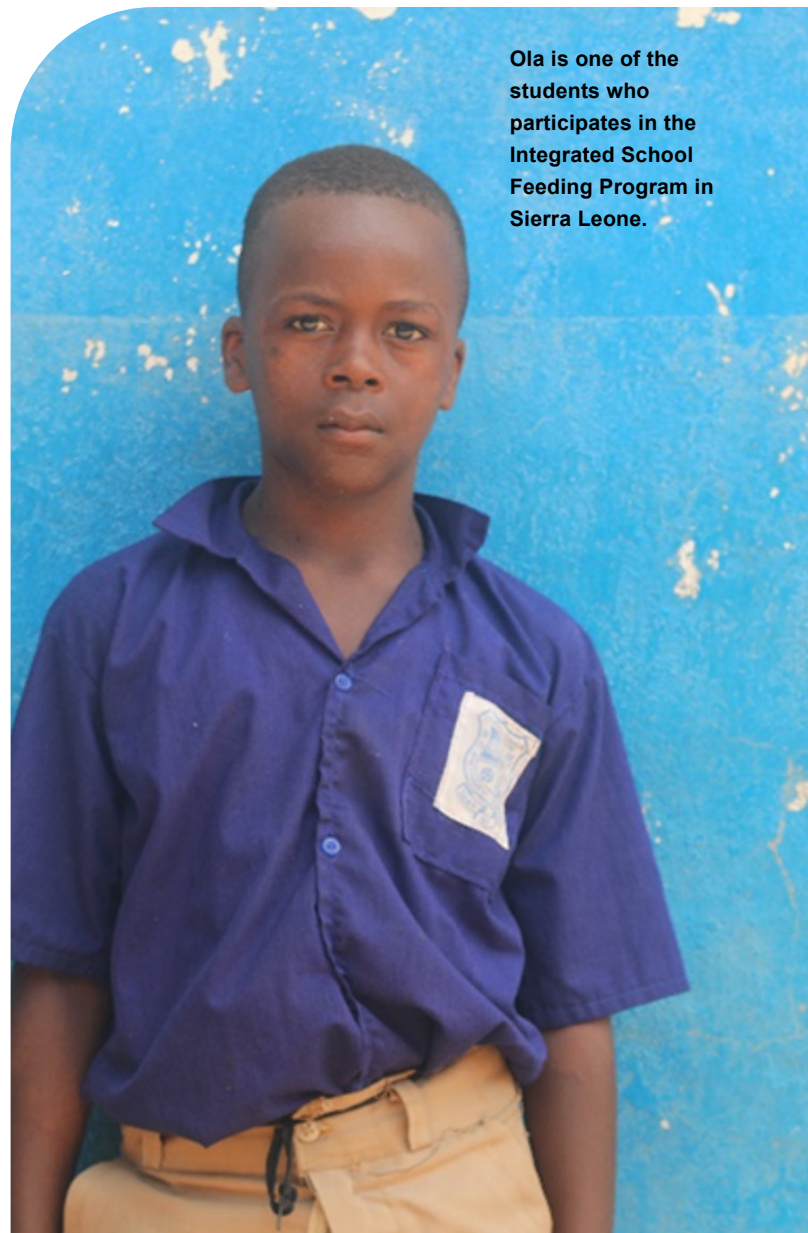
When Ola conquered hunger, nothing else could stand in his path.

Meet Ola, a resilient 13-year-old who lives with his grandmother in Sierra Leone. His grandmother can't work, which makes life challenging for them.

After his classes, Ola joins his aunt in selling cakes from noon until the early evening. By the time he gets home, he has little energy for his studies.

On his way to school, Ola would often turn back because he was too hungry to attend. But that changed with the introduction of Plan's Integrated School Feeding Program. Ola began attending school more regularly, and he encouraged his friends, who used to skip classes, to join him.

The program has been a game changer for Ola. It has offered him something to look forward to, alleviating hunger and helping him stay focused and motivated in the classroom. His participation and academic performance have soared, making him a more engaged learner, in contrast to his previous disinterest. Ola's teacher has observed significant progress in his studies since the program's implementation. It has provided him with not only the energy but also the motivation to excel academically.



Ola is one of the students who participates in the Integrated School Feeding Program in Sierra Leone.

With your support, Ola is determined to pursue his dreams and create a brighter future for himself and his family. Together, we're helping him reach new heights.

A STORY OF CHANGE

# One Meal, Countless Possibilities

Kadiatu's journey from hunger to hope took a remarkable turn in the classroom.

By the time the Integrated School Feeding Program arrived at her school, 12-year-old Kadiatu had already proven how determined she was to stay in class. When she reached fifth grade, she didn't have enough funds and had to quit school – but she found her way back at the first opportunity, with the help of a neighbour who found her a school where she didn't have to pay fees and gave her school supplies like a uniform, books and socks.

Kadiatu went to her new school each day, even though she was hungry. Her neighbours gave her food when they could, but it wasn't enough, and she often was sick. That changed when the Integrated School Feeding Program arrived. With regular meals Kadiatu can count on, her health and energy improved. In fact, she says it's the thing that gets her out of bed in the morning.

The program isn't only about food; it's about hope. Kadiatu dreams of being a doctor and helping her community, and she knows that education is the way to get there.



Thank you for supporting children like Kadiatu, Haja and Ola. Today their futures are more promising because they're able to feed both their bodies and their minds.

“

The meal at school every day is the first thing I think about when I wake up. I rush to school because I don't want to miss out on it.”

– Kadiatu, 12

Kadiatu overcame adversity to stay in school. Now, school meals are helping her get the most out of her education.

“

Now that the Integrated School Feeding Program is available at our school, I come to school with my friends who used to skip classes. It's great to have something to look forward to.”

– Ola, 13

# Our Supporters Stepped Up

Last year, we sent out an urgent call to supporters like you, to help fund a critical school meals program that would help reduce hunger and protect education in Sierra Leone. The response was incredible – thank you to each and every person who jumped into action. Together, we raised enough money to feed 300,000 children!

But that's not all: Because our supporters went above and beyond, we could too. We raised enough to fully fund the school meals program in Sierra Leone *and* to direct additional funds to another urgent hunger and education project serving families in crisis.

The Miniwao refugee camp in Cameroon is home to more than 36,000 children who have been displaced by ongoing violence and climate change in the Lake Chad region. In an area where hunger and humanitarian needs are at emergency levels, malnutrition rates are high, and for many children, education has been halted by poverty and instability.

We are so grateful to be able to provide monthly food supplies to 70,000 people in the Miniwao camp and surrounding areas, thanks to the abundant generosity of supporters like you. The program in Miniwao will also create temporary learning spaces and deliver school supplies like books, chalkboards and playground equipment so children can continue learning despite the disruptions they have experienced.



“School gardens and fresh vegetables are something we’re really excited about, because having access to nutritious food benefits the children and the entire community, who also receive some of the produce.”

– Ashley Dawson, senior program manager, Plan International Canada



Children at a Sierra Leone school thrive with daily nutritious meals.

## Thank you!

Your support means the world to us, and it's the reason we've been able to achieve so much. With your help, we're excited about the positive impact we've created for children and communities in Sierra Leone. Thank you for being part of this journey.

**Thank you again for your continued support.**



Until we are all equal



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Schoolchildren accept a food delivery for their school feeding program.

For more information,  
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## About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. We're determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.