

# McGovern-Dole School Feeding Program in Bolivia Improves Children's Health and Academic Performance

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In Bolivia, more than 162,000 children in 2,240 schools ate what was likely their only meal five days a week thanks to a Project Concern International (PCI) program funded by USDA's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) Program.

About three-fourths of Bolivia's population survives on two dollars a day and 26 percent of the population is chronically malnourished. Development is hindered by a lack of education, especially among girls, poor agricultural practices and limited infrastructure.



**The joint PCI and McGovern-Dole school breakfast program is helping Bolivian students stay healthy and better learn. (Photo by Andrew Carter and Louise Turner.)**

To remedy this situation, USDA donated more than 17,000 tons of wheat, wheat-soy blend, vegetable oil, peas and bulgur valued at more than \$4 million to PCI under a three-year McGovern-Dole Program agreement starting in fiscal year 2005. The commodities and cash provided by USDA were used by PCI to develop school feeding programs in 65 municipalities in the departments of Cochabamba, La Paz, Oruro and Potosi.

In 21 of the 65 municipalities involving 845 schools, local governments are now fully operating school feeding programs that provide nutritious meals five days a week during the school year. In 22 of the remaining 44 municipalities, children are getting a meal one to

three times a week or a small snack. These municipalities need further training and support to fully sustain a school feeding program.

Municipal governments, local communities and parents have told PCI that the school feeding programs have not only benefited the nutrition and health of the participating students, but have also improved the children's school attendance, retention and academic performance. As a result, the majority of municipalities continued to implement some sort of school feeding activity using self-generated resources and foodstuffs despite the fact that the PCI program ended in the middle of 2008. Over the course of the program, parents became more involved in designing feed rations, contributed their own resources and time

and advocated for continued food distribution and feeding programs with elected officials and municipal governments, fostering increased government support.

In recognition of the successes achieved so far and the desire by the governments and parents in these municipalities to continue school feeding activities, PCI submitted a McGovern-Dole proposal to extend the program another two years to ensure sustainability in the remaining 2,118 schools. USDA approved the proposal, which will provide additional technical support and training to municipal governments to ensure they increase funding for school feeding programs, as well as the private sector and parents to encourage more involvement and food contributions.

*For more information about PCI's development work, visit <http://www.projectconcern.org>.*