Educational and Health Impacts of Two School Feeding Schemes Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Rural Burkina Faso

2009. 44 p.

Authors:
Kazianga, Harounan
de Walque, Damien
Alderman, Harold

Organizations:
WORLD BANK

Description:
This paper uses a prospective randomized trial to assess the impact of two school feeding schemes on health and education outcomes for children from low-income households in northern rural Burkina Faso. The two school feeding programs under consideration are, on the one hand, school meals where students are provided with lunch each school day, and, on the other hand, take-home rations that provide girls with 10 kg of cereal flour each month, conditional on 90 percent attendance rate. After running for one academic year, both programs increased girls’ enrollment by 5 to 6 percentage points. While there was no observable significant impact on raw scores in mathematics, the time-adjusted scores in mathematics improved slightly for girls. The interventions caused absenteeism to increase in households that were low in child labor supply while absenteeism decreased for households that had a relatively large child labor supply, consistent with the labor constraints. Finally, for younger siblings of beneficiaries, aged between 12 and 60 months, take-home rations have increased weight-for-age by standard deviations and weight-for-height by standard deviations. In contrast, school meals did not have any significant impact on the nutrition of younger children.

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