



School girls laughing with their books in front of their school garden at school Ecofo Gatovu in Muyinga.

CASE STUDY

Background

Since 2019, World Vision and the World Food Programme have been working with the government of Burundi to provide Home-Grown School Meals in Muyinga Province. This has required significant investment in increasing the resilience and production of smallholder farmer co-operatives to ensure sustainable supply to 145 schools and nearly 132,000 students with daily hot meals. Gradually, the programme is working towards being fully supplied by local farmers. This nutrition-sensitive programme uses a school garden model to add locally appropriate nutritious vegetables and leaves to children's beans and maize or rice meals. Burundi has severe rates of child wasting, but this programme is working to combat this through building more resilient and sustainable food systems and through the universal provision of nutritious, local school meals as provided by the government.

World Vision and WFP are providing technical assistance and building the capacity of the government to run the programme independently in the coming years. Together, we are leveraging Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals) to achieve SDG 2 Zero Hunger, while also working towards other SDGs, especially: Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12).

PARTNERING FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION: SCHOOL MEALS IN BURUNDI



Joint field visit to primary school Ecofo Karongwe in Muyinga Province.

Creating Employment and Integrating Nutrition: Partnership with communities

This School Meals programme and others like it in Burundi achieve success because of the contributions of communities. School parents volunteer as cooks on regular rotations to ensure hot meals are ready for children at lunchtime. They also bring firewood and vegetables such as bananas, sweet potatoes, potatoes, cassava, and manioc. When schools don't have a water station, the parents also bring water. Through the school garden model, students grow locally appropriate and nutritious foods that also become a part of their lunch. This builds on the culture of cultivation in Burundi, where even the smallest piece of land can be sown to provide for children and families. School gardens help children gain skills in agriculture that they bring home. The programme also partners with school administration and teachers to integrate education, nutrition, child protection, water, hygiene and sanitation, as well as ensure supervision of food storage and facilitate their participation in the programme as valued community members.

Sustainability and Capacity Sharing: Partnership with the government

World Vision, as the implementing partner, and WFP, as the donor, have been partnering with the Burundi Ministry of Education at the provincial and communal levels to invest in the sustainability and future ownership of locally supplied school meal programmes like the one in Muyinga Province. Through technical assistance, training and capacity strengthening, there will be a gradual takeover as the government plans to provide this programme independently across the country.



A new school kitchen built by WFP for primary school Ecofo Musenyi in Muyinga Province.

Forging market linkages through home-grown school meals: Partnership with farmers' co-operatives

The School Meals programme is essential in forging market linkages to home-grown school meals. World Vision and our partners work along the supply chain, starting with producers. By partnering with agricultural co-operatives, we can address food systems gaps and support the sourcing of inputs, including seeds and fertilisers. We also provide training on post-harvest management to reduce food loss and waste and forge market linkages to move food from suppliers to consumers, focusing on storage, transport, and logistics. The schools drive market demand, encouraging more smallholders to collaborate in co-operatives to increase their livelihoods. Finally, we facilitate farmers' access to credit by forming connections between co-operatives and microfinance institutions.

Investing in Communities: Partnership with WFP

Partnerships are the foundation of every successful and long-term programme, and this Home-Grown School Meals programme is no exception. As the donor, WFP has always been a strong partner, creating conditions needed to serve hot school meals – including building kitchens, providing cooking utensils, warehouse and storage equipment, and supporting schools to obtain seeds and tools for gardens, repairs to storage or water structures. WFP also provides oversight to ensure high-quality food and support logistics with storage and transportation. Without the funding that WFP oversees, this programme and its transformative impact would not be possible.



Parents cooking and preparing to serve lunch at primary school Ecofo Mwakiro in Muyinga Province.

Lessons Learned

While this programme has been running for over 4 years, it has been improved iteratively each year, and we continue to learn valuable lessons that can be replicated across the rest of Burundi's provinces as well as in other countries. Throughout the life of this programme, we have seen the impact of this Home-Grown School Meals programme on communities. It relieves parents of worry about preparing lunch for their children and allows them to organise themselves well as communities while also reducing food consumption within households, which can contribute to increased household incomes.

One key lesson learned is that there is a need to strengthen food value chains and food systems in order for this programme to rely solely on locally grown products. The scale of production cannot currently match the scale of demand created by schools due to farmers' difficulty accessing seeds, fertiliser and post-harvest storage. There is also a need to improve the complementarity of school gardens with supplied products, by diversifying the products grown at schools to more nutritious vegetables, we can diversify children's diets rather than cultivating the same products being supplied through the program, such as beans, rice, and maize. Finally, School Meals programmes need to be scaled up to expand access to children across all provinces of Burundi so that they can realise their right to food and education without waiting another day.



School gardens at Ecofo Musenyi, a primary school in Muyinga Province.



Children laughing after lunch at school Ecofo Karongwe in Muyinga Province.