School meals for nutrition and learning

In the world’s most vulnerable countries, a daily school meal provides a powerful incentive to send children (especially girls) to school and keep them there. Proper nutrition is also vital to ensuring students are able to concentrate and learn. The WFP home-grown school feeding programmes, linking school lunches with small-scale farmers’ production, are an effective way of providing adequate nutrition for students, boosting local agriculture, and transforming food assistance into a sustainable investment for the whole community.

**DURATION:** 2014-2017

**CHALLENGE:** Access to Basic Services (education, nutrition)

**COUNTRY:** Burundi

**PARTNER:** World Food Programme

**CONTEXT**

School feeding is helping mitigate hunger for millions of children around the globe, contributing to their education, nutrition, health and future productivity. School meals programmes have many benefits: they provide a powerful incentive to send children (and especially girls) to school and to keep them there, while ensuring students receive the nutrients they need to concentrate and learn more efficiently. The production and purchase of school meals from local small-scale farmers, prominently women, boosts local agriculture and transforms food assistance into a sustainable investment for the whole community. Burundi has been identified as one of the countries with the greatest needs for the WFP programme linking school meals and local agriculture.
ACTION

- **School meals programme:** 40,000 children in 61 schools are provided with a daily hot meal of rice, pulse crops (beans, dried peas, lentils and chickpeas), vegetable oil and iodized salt with essential micronutrients. Cereals are purchased locally from small-scale farmers organized in cooperatives.

- **Boost local agriculture:** the domestic purchase of food products stimulates the local economy, providing smallholder farmers with a stable market for their products, increasing their income and encouraging the reinvestment of resources. Small-scale farmers’ organisations are empowered to become effective players in the agricultural market through training on post-harvest handling, financial literacy, gender awareness, marketing and record keeping.

- **Government support:** WFP works alongside the Ministry of Education to set up a nationally owned, funded and managed home-grown school meals programme and collaborates with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote the production of food and agricultural raw materials, improve access to markets and strengthen food security.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The global purpose of this programme is to reduce hunger while strengthening children’s access to primary education, to leverage purchasing power by connecting small-scale farmers with markets and to create an enabling environment that promotes economic opportunities and gender equality. The main expected results are:

- 817 metric tonnes of rice are purchased locally from smallholder associations and distributed in schools
- 5 smallholder farmer associations are trained each year in harvest handling and hygiene
- 6% annual increase in the number of girls and boys enrolled in WFP-assisted schools
- Rise in attendance rate of girls and boys in WFP-assisted schools to 90% of schooldays (disaggregated by gender)

LONG-TERM STRATEGY

WFP is working alongside the Government to enable it to take over the school feeding initiative and create nationally owned, funded and managed home-grown school meals programmes. The school feeding programme is officially recognized as a key intervention for ensuring quality education and tackling chronic malnutrition and food insecurity in the country. It is already part of the 2012-2020 national educational plan and is integrated into the wider system of government policies.

The WFP’s efforts to link school feeding and local agricultural production addresses the root causes of hunger and food insecurity by helping farmers, particularly women, produce more high quality food and access markets where they can sell it at a fair price, boosting their incomes and improving their livelihoods. School feeding programmes are multisectoral in nature. Synergies with other relevant development actors and stakeholders, such as UNICEF, the World Bank and WHO, are promoted to ensure sustainability and efficiency.