



World Vision

JÁ CHEGA

Brazil:

**Our meals,
our voice**



© World Vision

What's this about?

World Vision is leading the *School Meals Child-led Research* initiative, a unique effort that ensures children's voices are at the centre of shaping school meals programmes. Across 13 countries, children took the lead in asking questions, gathering stories, and sharing what matters most to them about school meals. They explored critical root causes, gaps and potential solutions, always through the lens of their lived experiences in schools.

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. The data collected by child researchers was analysed thematically, reflecting the priorities and perspectives of their peers.

In Brazil, this child-led research is part of World Vision's ENOUGH campaign (JÁ CHEGA in Portuguese), which amplifies children's voices in national, regional and global advocacy efforts. By listening to children and learning directly from their experiences, this initiative highlights not only the challenges faced by children in Brazil, but also their aspirations for a future where every child can thrive and enjoy nutritious meals at school.

Who we are

We are a group of students from Brazil who wanted to find out what our classmates really think about the food we eat at school. **We believe that what we eat affects everything -** how we learn, how we feel, and how healthy we are. We did this research because we know that **when young people share their experiences, things can change for the better.**

This research brings together children from different countries to talk about how school meals can be improved. In Brazil, we asked 140 students, aged 11 to 18, to share what they like, what they don't like, and what they want to change. Most were girls, but we also spoke with boys and other students because **everyone's opinion matters.**



© World Vision

What we found

When we asked students how they rate their school meals, most didn't have great things to say. Only a few said the food is really good, while a lot think it's just okay or even bad. Some students feel lucky because their school cooks are trained and the food tastes good, but others feel like they're not getting the kind of food they need.

Many talked about taste and quality. They shared that the food is often bland or not seasoned properly. There's also **too much packaged, ultra-processed food** and not enough fresh fruit or vegetables. Some feel the food doesn't really fill them up - the portions can be small, so they are hungry in the afternoon.

Cleanliness is another thing students notice. It's common to see flies around the lunch area. Not everyone preparing the food uses gloves or the right utensils. This makes some students feel uncomfortable eating at school.

We know that things can be better. Some schools have menus with more variety, like salads, fruits, and proteins. When cooks are trained and care about what they're doing, the food is healthier and tastes better.

What needs to change

Almost everyone we talked to said they want **more variety in the food served at school**. They're tired of eating the same snacks every day, like crackers and juice. Many want to see fresh fruits, more vegetables, and natural juices on the menu.

Some students said they want meals that fit their needs - for example, if they have food allergies or don't eat meat. Others mentioned that **the way the food is cooked really matters**. No one wants burnt or rubbery meat on their plate.

When asked to design their perfect school meals, students proposed a light breakfast with bread, couscous, or fruit. This was followed by a full meal with rice, beans, protein, and fresh salad at lunchtime. They also suggested healthy snacks, like natural juice or yoghurt, to help students stay focused for the rest of the day.

But it's not just the food that needs to get better. Many students said that standing in long, messy lines waiting for school meals is one of the worst parts of lunchtime. Sometimes, by the time they get their food, there's hardly any time left to eat. And when they reach the front of the queue, the amount they're served is often not enough.

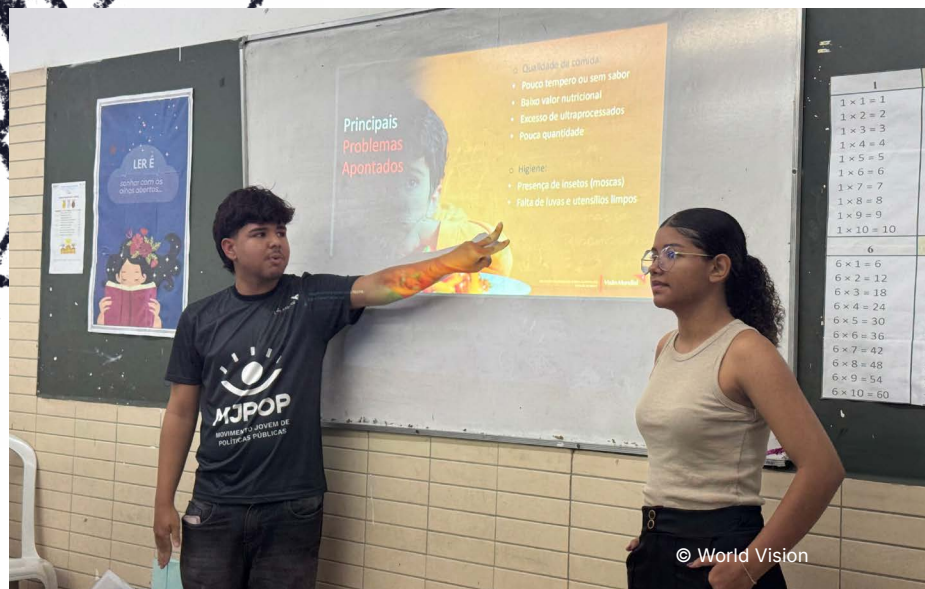


© World Vision

Does anyone listen?

One thing that stood out is how **rarely students are asked what they think about the food they're served**. Most said they're never asked at all. Only a few said they ever get to share what they think. But when we asked if they'd like to have a say, almost everyone said yes. Students want to be heard because they know what students like us need. It's our health, our time at school, and our lives. **We want a chance to help make things better.**

When we looked at students' answers by age and gender, we noticed that girls - especially older girls - care a lot about nutrition and cleanliness. Younger students focus more on taste and how much food they get. Older students want more options and meals that fit their needs.



What we hope for

We want every student in Brazil to have tasty, healthy, and fresh meals at school. Our kitchens and dining areas should always be clean. We should have enough food, so no one feels hungry before the day is over. And we want schools to care about what we think and what we need.

Our message is simple: **if you listen to us, we can help fix what's not working.** Better food means we can study better and feel better. We know what's missing and what can help. **We want adults to hear us and take us seriously.**

Our voice matters. Our school meals matter. Our future matters.

- Brazilian child researchers

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the child researchers in Brazil for their valuable feedback and innovative contributions. Their views and recommendations were central to this report.

Special thanks to: **Dr. Patricio Cuevas-Parra, Mario Stephano**

Report curated by **Eoin O'Keeffe**

Copyediting: **Helen Shipman**

Design: **Carol Homs**

Cover photo: © **World Vision / Samila de Souza**

For further information about this publication please contact: mario_stephano@wvi.org

For more information about World Vision's School Meals, visit the [ENOUGH School Meals page](#).

© **WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL 2025**. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form, except for brief excerpts in reviews, without prior permission of the publisher.

World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. World Vision carries out lifesaving humanitarian efforts with investments from numerous partners, including institutional donors, faith-based organisations, corporations and governments.

CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING

World Vision ensured the safe and ethical participation of girls, boys adhering to World Vision's Safeguarding policy and protocols on data collection and World Vision's Code of Conduct.

Data collectors were trained on how to conduct interviews in an ethical and safe manner. Children were oriented on the possibility of withdrawing from the interview process at any moment. Informed consent was obtained for all photographs included in this report.



© World Vision