



World Vision

SUFICIENTE

Guatemala:

**Our meals,
our voice**



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 Guatemala, this child-led research is part of World Vision's ENOUGH campaign (SUFICIENTE in Spanish), 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 Guatemala, but also their aspirations for a future where every child can thrive and enjoy nutritious meals at school.



Who we are

In Guatemala, we came together as students to raise our voices about what we like and don't like about the meals we get at school. **We know that good food helps us grow, stay healthy, and focus on our studies.** But not many people ask us what we think about the meals we're given. That's why we did this research - to share our experiences and our ideas about how things can improve.

Sixty-four students took part in this research: 32 girls, 25 boys, and seven others who identified differently. We are between 11 and 17 years old and come from different schools, but we all agree that the food we receive at school makes a difference in our day.

What we found

When we asked students what kind of food they get, most said they eat food prepared at school. Some also get food bags from their families that contain snacks from home. And a few bring their own food because they don't like what's provided at school or because they go to private schools that don't offer school meals.

We talked about why school meals are so important. Some of us said **they help us feel strong and healthy, especially those who don't always get enough food at home.** Others said they live far away and don't have time to eat breakfast before leaving for school. We know that good food helps us feel better, stay well, and pay attention in class.

When we talked about how nutritious the food is, opinions were mixed. Some students felt the meals were healthy, while others thought they were not very good. A few of us weren't sure how to answer this question, because often what's described as "nutritious" - like the food bags - doesn't seem fresh or healthy. For us, **nutritious food means fresh vegetables, grains, beans, rice, tortillas, little tamales, eggs, and meat - the kinds of food that help us feel strong and ready to learn.**

We also discussed how we feel when we receive the food. Most of us said we feel well treated and safe with the people who prepare the food. However, a few students mentioned that those serving can sometimes seem serious or impatient, making the experience feel less friendly.

Does anyone listen to us?

One thing that stood out is that most of us are not asked for our opinions about school meal menus. Only a few students said their school asks them what they think. Most of us feel we simply have to eat what we're given, whether we like it or not.

Still, when we asked each other if school meals should change, half of us said they should be improved. Some even said the meals should change completely. Many of us said that **the food isn't very balanced, is too repetitive, or lacks enough flavour and seasoning**. Others said the portions are sometimes too small or that the food has too much fat or sugar.

Our ideas for change

When we talked about how school meals could be improved, we all had ideas. Many students said they want the **menus to change more often and include more variety**. We want bigger portions, so we don't feel hungry. We'd like to have more cereals, fruits, vegetables, and protein. Some students said they'd love to see local dishes like enchiladas or chicken with rice.

We also want the food to be prepared and served with care. It's important that the food is cooked well, with good seasoning and not too much fat. Hygiene matters too - kitchens, plates, and utensils should always be clean.

Many of us think **schools should ask for our opinions more often, such as having feedback boxes where we can share our ideas**. We know it's not easy to feed so many children, but we believe that listening to us can make school meals better for everyone.



What we hope for

We know that **for many students, a school meal is not just something small - it's our right and sometimes the only full meal we get in a day**. We hope that by sharing our voices, the people who make decisions will listen and help make school meals healthier, tastier, and enough for every child.

School meals are a big part of our lives - they affect how we feel, how we learn, and how we grow. **We want food that gives us energy, supports our health, and helps us concentrate in class**. It should be fresh, tasty, and served with respect.

But just as important, we want to be part of the conversation. **When decision-makers take the time to hear from us, they can make choices that truly reflect what students actually need**.

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

- Child researchers from Guatemala

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

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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.



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