



World Vision

ENOUGH

Rwanda:

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



Who we are

We are students from Rwanda who wanted to share our experiences of the food we eat at school. We know that what we eat affects our health, how much energy we have in class, and how well we can learn.

This research gave us the chance to speak up about what is working well in our national school meals programme and what could be improved.

A total of 103 students, aged 7-19, took part. Just over half were girls (51%) and the rest were boys (49%). 31% were 7-10 years old, 48% were 11-15, and 21% were 16-19. Together, we represent a wide range of experiences from both primary and secondary school.

We discussed our views on the meals, the level of hygiene where we eat, whether we are asked for our opinions, and how school meals are funded. **We also shared our ideas for how the school meals programme could be improved.**

What we see at school

Most of us are happy with the meals we get. Almost half are very happy, and another large group are pretty happy. This means more than eight out of ten students feel positive about the school meals programme.

We think this is because before school feeding started, no meals were provided at school. Now, with the government making it a priority and providing a budget for school meals, we are better fed and feel healthier. In the past, many of us had to walk home to eat, which took time and left us tired. **Now we can stay at school, eat, and use the extra time to study.**

Still, just over one in 10 of us said that we are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with our school meals, and a few of us said we aren't happy at all. This usually happens when the meals don't meet the required standards, such as when the food isn't good enough or there simply isn't enough of it.

Nearly everyone said that school principals, teachers, and parents ask us what we think about the food, often asking about quality, portion size, and how it is prepared. Parents sometimes want to know if the meals are worth the fees they pay. **We believe it is important for schools to listen to students' feedback and share it with school principals, so they understand the reality of what children are eating.**

Hygiene matters

Approximately two thirds of us think the places where we eat and wash our hands or dishes are clean. Some said these places are “good”, others said they are “very good”. We’ve noticed better kitchen furniture and tools have come to the schools and it helps when there’s water and soap to wash our hands before and after eating. We know this keeps us healthy and stops us from getting sick.

However, a third of us said hygiene is poor, usually when there’s no water or when clean and dirty water is mixed.

Without enough clean water, it’s impossible to maintain the cleanliness required.



The cost of school meals

In our schools, the government pays 85% of the costs and parents pay the remaining 15%. This works out at about US\$0.70 per child every three months. Even though this is a relatively small amount, some families struggle to pay. We believe vulnerable children should not have to pay at all, and no child should ever be suspended because their family cannot afford the contribution.

We have ideas for convincing parents that the school meals programme is worth it. We can explain the benefits of eating at school, such as doing better in class, having more energy, and staying in school.

We can also connect parents with teachers and school leaders so they can hear directly about why the programme matters.

For families who truly cannot pay, we suggest reducing the school meal fee, finding sponsors, letting parents help at school instead of paying the fee, and asking the government to cover the additional costs.

What we'd change

We have many ideas for improving school meals.

For food, we want more variety. Every school meal should include fruits and vegetables, and animal products should be added to the menu. **Meals should have the right balance of carbohydrates, proteins, and micronutrients. Portions should be big enough, so no child is left feeling hungry.**

In terms of hygiene, **schools should set clear standards to keep kitchens and eating areas clean.** Cooks should wear clean clothes and be trained in best practices to keep everything clean.

For infrastructure, every school needs proper kitchen equipment and a dining hall so we don't have to eat in our classrooms and then spend time cleaning them before lessons can continue. **Schools could also grow more vegetables in their gardens to ensure meals include fresh produce.** If school grounds were larger, we could grow more crops and help make school feeding more sustainable.



What we hope for

We want every student in Rwanda to have healthy, tasty, and filling meals at school. The places where we eat should always be clean, with enough water for everyone to wash their hands before and after eating. If a family can't afford the fee for school meals, their child should still be able to eat because no one should miss out on the meals due to lack of money.

Above all, we want to keep being asked for our opinions, because we know what is working and what needs to change. Our voices should help shape the meals we eat every day because school feeding is not just about food, it's about giving us the chance to learn, stay healthy, and build our future.

Our voices matter. Our school meals matter. Our future matters.

- Rwandan child researchers

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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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