



World Vision

ENOUGH

Zambia:

**Our meals,
our voice**



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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 Zambia, 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 Zambia, 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 Zambia who wanted to understand what school meals really mean to our friends.

What we eat at school affects our energy, our concentration, and how we feel each day - yet no one asked us what we think about school meals. We decided to find out.

Seventy-four students between the ages of 10 and 17 shared their experiences with us. We asked them questions during lunchtime, sitting together and chatting while we ate. It made it easier to talk honestly. What we found surprised us and taught us a lot - not just about food, but about what children like us need to thrive.

What we found

Almost everyone said that school meals are either good or very good. In total, 99% of the students we spoke to gave a positive rating. They spoke about how important these meals are and how much they value them.

Students told us that the food helps them to stay strong, gives them energy to play, and helps them focus in class. Some said their performance in school and their attendance has improved because of the school meals. Others shared that school meals have encouraged children who had stopped attending to return to school.

For many children, school meals are the main meal of the day - especially in families that don't always have food at home. After last year's drought, some students said the school feeding programme was a relief for their households. One student explained that the meals help children go home happy, because they feel satisfied and well fed.

How the meals are served

Most students also said the way food is served is good or very good. **They appreciate that everyone is treated equally, and no one is left out.** Many said they were happy with how the food is prepared and served, and they appreciate the effort made by cooks and teachers.

Still, there were a few suggestions to improve how meals are served. Some students said they would like soap for washing hands, not just water. **Others mentioned wanting clean plates to eat from, and a proper place to wash them. Hygiene was something many students felt strongly about.**

Some also said it would help if organisations like World Vision could visit and observe how food is being prepared and served. This could help schools learn new ways to do things and make the meals even better.

Does anyone listen to students?

When we asked if students are ever consulted about school meals, the results varied. **Very few were regularly asked about school meals, but almost all (91%) said they would like to be involved and to share their ideas.**

This shows that students are ready to speak up - they just need more chances to be heard. Some might not always feel confident speaking out, but still have important ideas about what works and what could be improved. **We believe that if schools ask for students' opinions more often, this can help make school meals better for everyone.**

Ideas for change

Although many students said they were happy with the meals, they also had ideas to make them better. Some suggested that meals could include more variety. They mentioned things like adding sugar, milk, or groundnuts. Others said it would help to add vegetables, so the meals are more balanced. **Some students said that food should be served in equal portions and that special meals could be provided for children with different needs.**

Hygiene came up in many of our conversations. Students asked for better handwashing facilities, with soap and clean water, and proper places to clean dishes so that everyone can eat in a safe and healthy way.



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What we hope for

We believe that school meals are helping students like us learn, grow, and stay healthy. They give us the strength to pay attention in class and to enjoy our time at school. They also help many of our families by making sure we get something to eat during the day, even in difficult times.

We hope that the school feeding programme continues and improves. We hope for clean eating areas, balanced meals, and for all children to be treated equally. Most of all, we hope that adults will listen to what we have to say.

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

- Zambian child researchers

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

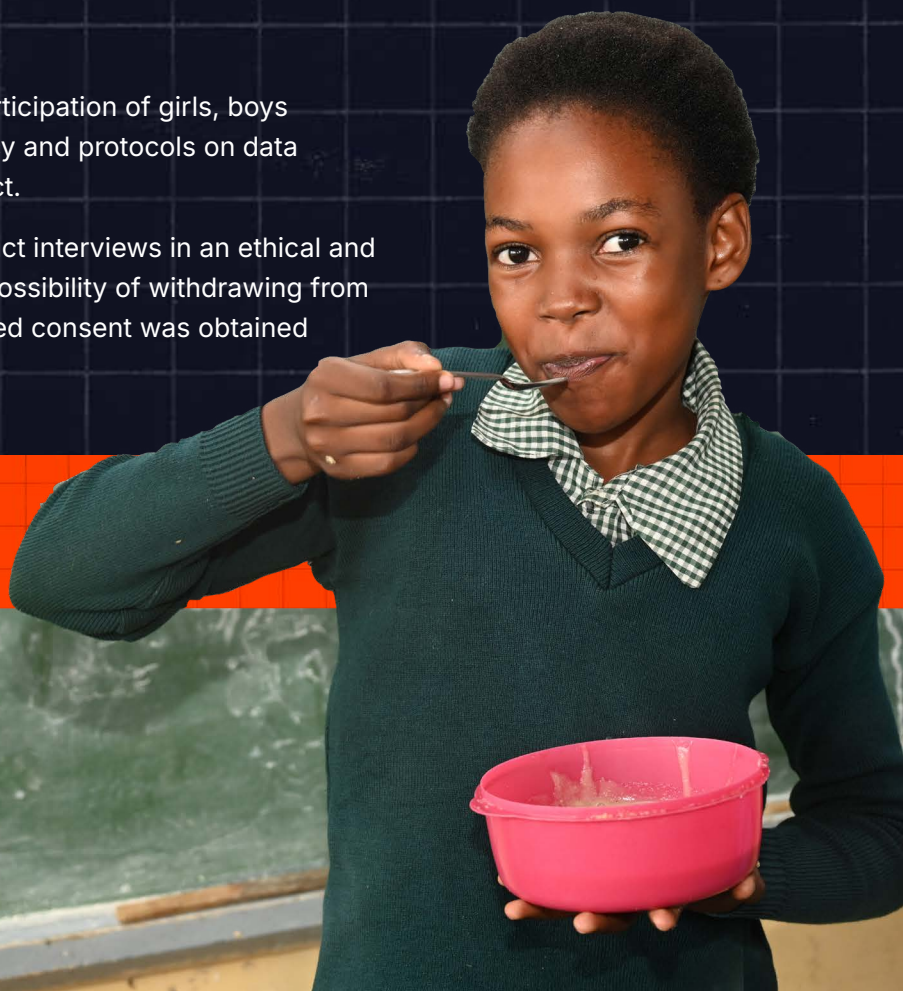
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CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING

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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