WFP
World Food Programme

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WFP EVALUATION

PILOT IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE COMMODITY VOUCHER PROCUREMENT MODEL IN BURUNDI

Burundi ranks among the countries with the lowest GDP per capita in the world.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), in close collaboration with the Government of Burundi and its implementing partners, provides daily nutritious meals and snacks to approximately 739,000 school children across 885 public schools in eight provinces in Burundi.

Traditionally, WFP implements an in-kind, centralized procurement model, procuring food and delivering it to schools through cooperating partners. Meals includes a combination of imported and local cereals, beans, fortified vegetable oil, iodised salt, and yellow split peas, prepared and distributed by parents on a voluntary, rotational basis.

In 2018, the Government of Burundi adopted a National School Feeding Policy aiming to achieve universal coverage by 2032. To increase the use of locally produced school meals, WFP, in partnership with cooperating partners and the National School Canteens Department of the Directions Provinciale de l'Education (DPE), piloted a new commodity voucher (CV) procurement model in three provinces in 2022 and 2023.

Under this new CV procurement model, WFP transfers funds to the DPE in participating provinces who then procure food commodities from local cooperatives through a restricted tender process. Contracted cooperatives provide food directly to schools, and parents prepare and distribute meals on a voluntary, rotational basis, similar to the centralized model.

The new procurement model has the potential to boost local and provincial markets in agricultural communities and may positively affect local cooperatives and smallholder farmers.

WFP's Office of Evaluation, in partnership with the World Bank's Development Impact department (DIME), conducted a pilot impact evaluation in the form of a lean impact evaluation to assess whether this CV model approach improves the performance of school meal delivery (quantity, diversity, quality of meals) compared to the centralized model.

KEY EVIDENCE

The new commodity voucher model significantly increased the number of meal days per month – from 7.4 meal days in the centralized model, to 13 days in the new model. The greater use of refined rice procured from local cooperatives primarily led to this increase. However, school meal quality declined, as measured by the GDQS-Meal.

Nevertheless, in food insecure countries like Burundi, where regular caloric sufficiency is crucial, the inclusion of refined rice may be regarded as an acceptable compromise to maintain meal frequency.

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KEY FINDINGS

1 **What is the impact on school meal quantities of procuring food commodities using a CV decentralized model compared with the centralized model?**

The commodity voucher procurement model significantly increased the number of meal-days with children receiving meals 13 days per month on average, compared to 7.4 meal days per month under the centralized model. This could be due to schools procuring from local markets were less prone to supply chain disruptions.

2 **What is the impact on school meal diversity of procuring food commodities using a CV decentralized model compared with the centralized model?**

The increase in the number of meal days from the commodity voucher model was driven by the shift from maize flour to locally produced refined rice, due to local supply chain capacity, food safety considerations, and seasonality.

The quantity of beans distributed also doubled In the CV schools, although from a lower base compared to rice.

3 **What is the impact on school meal quality of procuring food commodities using a CV decentralized model compared with the centralized model?**

Meal quality, measured by the Global Diet Quality Score-Meal (GDQS-Meal), decreased in commodity voucher schools due to the increased use of refined rice, which is considered less healthy compared to fortified maize.

4 **What is the cost-efficiency of the CV model compared to the centralized model?**

Cost analysis reveals that, on average, the commodity voucher model was cheaper, costing US$40.61 per child per year compared to US$46.85 for the centralized model. These findings, however, largely depend on the differences between local prices and central procurement prices at the time of the study and the food composition of the menus under each model.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The pilot impact evaluation employed a lean impact evaluation approach. It used an experimental design, randomly assigning 95 schools in three provinces (Bubanza, Bujumbura, and Muyinga) into two groups:

- **COMMODITY VOUCHER SCHOOLS**: 50 schools were assigned to transition to the new decentralized model and were mapped to 12 farmer cooperatives.
- **CENTRALISED SCHOOLS**: 45 schools continued receiving food from the status quo centralized procurement system.

All the schools and children continued receiving school meals.

PROGRAMME IMPLICATIONS

Burundi's new commodity voucher model proved more effective in increasing school feeding days compared with a centralized procurement model, mainly due to local sourcing reducing supply chain disruptions.

However, key factors could be considered for this or future programmes.

- **Strike balance between meal frequency and quality by introducing fortified rice and wholegrain meal options.**
  The shift from fortified maize to refined rice increased meal frequency but reduced meal quality. While refined rice supports caloric sufficiency in food-insecure contexts such as in Burundi, to balance coverage and quality, the programme could introduce fortified rice, wholegrains, and including fruits and vegetables. Meal composition decisions should factor in local processing capacity, food safety, and market availability.
- **Further explore the potential impact of supplying school meals on the local economy.**
  The pilot impact evaluation demonstrated significant market potential for local farmers and cooperatives in supplying school meal commodities.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The pilot impact evaluation supports scaling up the commodity voucher procurement model.

Based on the evidence and lessons learned during this pilot, WFP's Office of Evaluation, the Burundi Country Office and World Bank's DIME launched larger-scale impact evaluation in January 2024.

This impact evaluation will assess the commodity voucher' impact on children's nutrition, health and education outcomes, as well as the local economy. Questions and designs are available in the inception note.

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES IMPACT EVALUATION WINDOW

School-based programmes are one of the most extensive social safety nets worldwide. There is a growing need for more evidence to inform the trade-offs in school-based programmes' designs and implementations and understand how they can play a role as a social safety net protecting boys and girls during shocks.

In 2021, the World Food Programme, in partnership with the World Bank, launched the School-based Programmes Impact Evaluation Window to generate a portfolio of impact evaluation evidence to inform policy decisions and programmes. Since then, six experimental impact evaluations have started in The Gambia, Jordan, Burundi, Guatemala, Malawi, and Madagascar.

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