



How WFP Supported Dietary Diversification of Vulnerable Ecuadorians and Colombian Refugees

Overview:

WFP, the Government of Ecuador, and partners are implementing nutrition-sensitive programmes to increase the dietary diversity of vulnerable Ecuadorians and Colombian refugees. The programmes link local production of diverse, nutritious foods to beneficiaries. WFP repositioned itself in Ecuador as an important nutrition partner and, in close collaboration with national and local governments, and other partners, initiated integrated programmes to increase dietary diversity, improve food and nutrition security, support stable markets for small-holder farmers, and increase capacity in food security and nutrition for beneficiaries, partners, and small-holder farmers. WFP's continued strategic leadership and technical assistance is guiding and expanding these complex programmes. This case study presents lessons on how WFP redefined its role in a Middle Income Country to address persistent problems of nutritional deficiencies and food insecurity.

Key WFP Success Factors

- Leadership with innovative vision for repositioning WFP in a Middle Income Country
- Flexibility and commitment of WFP staff and partner staff
- Capacity to capitalize on opportunity
- Ability to generate and utilize data
- Presence of WFP staff at local level
- Ability to be programmatically flexible
- Capacity and expertise to sensitize, train, and advise
- Innovation in technology to improve programme efficiency

WFP and the Government of Ecuador have worked together for many years to address food and nutrition insecurity facing vulnerable Ecuadorians and Colombian refugees. Since 2011, the focus of the collaborative work has been to improve access to and promotion of consumption of healthy foods, especially locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables.



Quick Facts:

- Ecuador is a Middle Income Country of 16 million people.
- Anaemia is a public health problem with a prevalence of 26% in under-5s, 38% in under-3s, and 62% in children under one year of age (2012).
- 25% of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition.
- Ecuador has the largest influx of refugees in all of South America.

Improving lives

Ecuador is making important efforts to fight malnutrition and anaemia. Recognizing that **education on nutrition** enhances the effects of food assistance, WFP employs *Behaviour Change Communication*. Before receiving vouchers, project participants attend nutrition trainings where they learn about the importance of a healthy, **diverse diet**. WFP teaches families healthy recipes using traditional ingredients via **dynamic workshops**, which often involve taste tests, cooking demonstrations, or dramatic theatre.

In 2013, more than 60,000 participants and their families learned what the best purchases are and how to use them to make nutritious meals.

In 2014, families receiving WFP assistance for at least 6 months consumed food from **7 out of 10** food groups, compared with only 4 prior to the programme.



Innovations in technology

- In 2012, WFP made the switch: instead of the original paper vouchers, each project participant now receives a card with a unique barcode. In this new form, the vouchers can be charged with varying values, depending on the number of family members.
- Most importantly, the vouchers are linked to the System for Monitoring and Reviewing Transfers (SMART). This system, which WFP developed in Ecuador, allows WFP and partners to **track purchases** made by project participants.
- In this way, the programme's impact on dietary diversity can be directly observed, allowing WFP to **continuously evaluate** and adjust strategies in order to have the greatest positive effect on project participants' dietary diversity.

Engagement

- By including both Colombian refugees *and* vulnerable Ecuadorians in WFP's programmes, **tensions are reduced** between the refugees and their host Ecuadorian communities.
- WFP's focus on women farmers and refugees leads them to greater **decision-making abilities**.
- WFP devotes time and resources to sensitizing local government leaders; their support gives the programme **legitimacy within the community**.
- Instead of shipping in outside food, beneficiaries are linked to local producers of fruits and vegetables, in order to improve both dietary diversity and community integration.

Empowering women

- Women refugees account for more than 50 percent of WFP project participants.
- Women's participation in the voucher programme decreased gender-based violence by **38-43%**.
- Of the 2,054 small farmers involved in WFP activities in five provinces, **56% are women**.
- Women in small farmers associations that receive extra income through WFP programmes have greater independence and ability to invest more in the lives of their children.



See Case Study at: <http://www.wfp.org/content/how-wfp-helped-diversify-diet-colombian-refugees-vulnerable-ecuadorians>

For further information please contact: Kyungnan.Park@wfp.org