

Transforming the world through food

Education is the key to improved diets, as a Japanese NGO demonstrated, when it travelled abroad with a **CURRICULUM OF NUTRITION**.

“Juice is also a liquid and tastier than plain water. Why do you recommend we drink plain water and not juice?” This understandable question was the response when Japanese not-for-profit RESULTS Japan set out to better understand the nutrition and dietary habits of Kenyan school children.

Established in 1989, RESULTS Japan’s mission is to work towards a world where all people can live with dignity. Through advocacy and the media, it encourages politicians to make more effective policies by reflecting the voices of those in need.

RESULTS JAPAN CONTINUES TO TRACK THESE PROJECTS TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE POLICIES

RESULTS Japan worked with schools in low-income areas where household income is 10,000 to 30,000 Kenyan shillings per month (US\$92-\$276). When staff checked the height and weight of 170 students regularly, they found 44 of them did not satisfy the

guidelines from the Kenyan Ministry of Health. Food diaries showed the students ate mostly carbohydrates such as ugali, Kenyan cornbread, and mandazi, a local donut. Tea (chai) was a common beverage, with lots of sugar and milk. Githeri, a bean stew, and a regular canteen offering, was one of the few sources of protein for the students. It was rare for them to have access to vitamins through fresh fruit and vegetables.

Their unbalanced diet was a result not only of poverty but also misconceptions about nutrition. For example, the question around juice.

RESULTS Japan nutritionists needed to educate the students on the value of drinking one litre of water per day to stimulate metabolism and elimination and reduce sugar intake.

Likewise, staff tried to raise the parents’ understanding of nutrition. However, in such a poor neighbourhood, many parents were too busy trying to meet basic needs to absorb new information about nutrition.

This year, both a locust plague and unseasonably heavy rains and flooding occurred in Kenya, destroying crops and driving the price of food to double or triple. Furthermore,



RESULTS Japan teaming up with locals to bring nutrition education to Kenyan schools.

COVID-19 exacerbated food insecurity. Due to schools closing in March, pupils missed out on school meals, which for the poorer students may have been their primary source of energy. Meanwhile, economies have been shattered by the virus, leaving people without paid work, swelling the numbers of people below the poverty line.

The World Food Programme, recently honored with a Nobel Peace Prize, has worked on food distribution, not only for refugees, but also for such poor communities in Nairobi. Yet, such emergency assistance is a once-off and not sustainable. Developing countries need to acquire resilience to respond quickly to emergencies.

Therefore, RESULTS Japan promotes advocacy through the Government of Japan and various stakeholders toward a sustainable balanced diet for all.

RESULTS Japan’s approach is in two key areas. First, RESULTS Japan aims to implement projects in response to recent local challenges and analysis of the evidence. For example, climate change is becoming a serious problem globally. In previous projects led by Japan, Japanese solar power was installed to provide a stable power supply and improve the productivity of farmers in Nigeria. Meanwhile in Cote d’Ivoire, women and small-scale fishermen were taught a traditional Japanese fish



Teaching the next generation of Kenyans about the components of a healthy diet.

processing technique called surimi. The project reduces fish waste and preserves fish for future nutrition, while also improving the status of women. RESULTS Japan continues to track these projects with the International Food Policy Research Institute to obtain evidence and develop effective policies for governments.

Second, RESULTS Japan aims to expand the nutrition education that has long been implemented in Japan. Since before Second World War, Japan has valued trained nutritionists. Even in the poverty of the post-war period, children have been provided well-balanced school meals by nutritionists every weekday. At the same time,

nutritionists educate children on why a balanced diet is important. Japan has established a culture of food education at home and in the community through educational activities such as Food Education Month. The reason for the success of such programmes is leadership from the Government of Japan, not only in involving nutritionists, but also involving local government, schools, the private sector, and all citizens in promoting the mindset of eating right.

Kenya changed its curriculum in 2017 and set out to provide nutrition instruction, but the transition has not been completed. Despite a system in place to train nutritionists, their employment opportunities

are scarce. For example, some countries, such as Mozambique, have only three nutritionists in the whole country. Based on Japan's successful experience, RESULTS Japan is seeking to develop an effective way to train and secure leaders for nutrition in both countries. In the meantime, RESULTS Japan will work with the relevant organizations to build an efficient mechanism for multi-sectoral nutrition initiatives.

The Government of Japan will host the next Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G) in December 2021 in time for Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. This 'nutrition Olympics' will be a wonderful opportunity to accelerate the

momentum for establishing the system of sustainable nutrition improvement.

Taking lessons from global emergencies, RESULTS Japan continues the momentum to accomplish a balanced diet for all across the world by involving as many people as possible, including government officials, members of parliaments, international organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society, and global citizens. ■

RESULTS
the power to end poverty

<http://resultsjp.org/english>