



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/peace-corps-volunteer-promotes-dietary-diversity-and-entrepreneurship-rwanda>

Peace Corps Volunteer Promotes Dietary Diversity and Entrepreneurship in Rwanda



Peace Corps

At a school in Rwanda, showing off massive mushrooms grown from a single tube seed.

In a community in Rwanda, Feed the Future Peace Corps Volunteer Caitlin Hughes learned from parents and teachers that students at a local secondary boarding school were facing underwhelming dietary diversity on a daily basis. While the students were served three meals a day, their meals consisted only of porridge, beans, and either maize bread or rice.

The school administration's budget did not allow for purchasing more varied foods or buying more land for gardening, so Hughes decided to work with the local community to boost nutritional awareness and dietary diversity by cultivating mushrooms. With a grant from the Small Project Assistance program, which is a joint collaboration between the Peace Corps and the U.S. Agency for International Development, Hughes coordinated a two-day training with student leaders, teachers, kitchen staff, and school administration officials to instruct them on how to construct an indoor growing space on their existing property, cultivate a mushroom crop, and harvest and cook the mushrooms. The community matched some of the funding for the project to cover labor and land costs.

Since the training, the self-titled "Mushroom Committee" has applied these skills and taught the broader school community, including more than 350 students, about the importance of good nutrition. After constructing a growing space and completing their first harvest, the school is now serving mushrooms at meals, including a recipe for mushrooms in bean sauce that received good reviews from the students.

Another goal of Hughes' project was to equip the school with a self-sustaining income-generating business that will allow participating staff to develop and sell mushrooms to support the school's resource needs. School staff will attend a finance course where they will learn about saving, budgeting, and borrowing, obtaining credit and starting a business. After graduation from the Feed the Future-supported course, the school business will use third-party funding from interested village households, nearby local restaurants and hotels to help cover start-up costs and operations. Over the long term, the profits will be used to purchase more mushroom seeds, finance other savings plans for school fees and fund community health insurance subscriptions.