



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/young-kenyan-mothers-work-together-improve-food-security-and-nutrition>

# Young Kenyan Mothers Work Together to Improve Food Security and Nutrition



Joan Lewa/USAID

Young mothers in Kenya grow and eat nutritious vegetables for better health.

In Kenya, a group of young women are working collaboratively to put to use their knowledge of food and nutrition. The group is turning a profit while feeding themselves and their children by cultivating a shared urban farm in Mombasa.

The young mothers who make up the group knew from the staff at the local health clinic that consuming vegetables and legumes would improve their health and that of their infants. These foods, along with fruits, nuts, fish, dairy products, and whole grains are all excellent sources of key nutrients for breastfeeding mothers.

"You must eat nutritious foods if you want your child to have enough milk, the doctor would always say," says Mary Were.

However, like so many young urban Kenyans, Were and these mothers lacked both the money to purchase such nutritious foods and the land to grow it themselves.

A USAID youth program that works closely with Feed the Future brought these young mothers together, helping them organize into a youth *bunge*, the Kiswahili word for parliament.

Were's *bunge*, in the Changamwe neighborhood of Mombasa, provided a forum for youth to find solutions to their common problems. Empowered to address their lack of resources, Mary and the other young mothers in the group asked the head doctor at the local health clinic if they could use the land in the clinic compound to grow vegetables and beans.

The group purchased seedlings and plastic bags, and with manure collected from chicken sheds they started "bag farming" (pictured above). Now the young mothers grow a variety of vegetables and legumes and sell what they do not eat. Profit is divided equally among members and each participant can earn as much as \$30 per week.

Since the Changamwe youth *bunge* is registered with the Government of Kenya as a self-help group, it is eligible to receive support from the Ministry of Agriculture, which provides extension services, seedlings, and other inputs.

"Without mobilizing ourselves as youth, we would never have met to start bag farming. Our children would not be as healthy as they are now, and we wouldn't have enough money to buy other nutritious foods," Were says with a smile. "We don't sleep hungry anymore and our children are growing healthy and strong."

Did you know that August 12 was International Youth Day? [Read Secretary Clinton's press statement on youth](#) or [view a video message from USAID Administrator Shah](#).