

August 2021 Sustained Grantee Spotlight: Gardens for Health International

Gardens for Health International immediately jumped in to help with COVID-19 mitigation efforts in Rwanda when the virus arrived in March 2020. Direct food support in the form of nutritious vegetables straight from the farm helped local families, while capacity-building efforts with the local health system helped with everything from health screening to handwashing stations, masks, and more. Food, as always, was at the forefront of programs, helping to ensure that good, nutritious meals were available. In all, GHI's COVID-19 response included more than 2.8 tons of direct food aid to families. Peer support continued throughout the pandemic, with women supporting each other in maintaining healthy nutrition and financial habits, even in a frightening and unprecedented time.

After a long pandemic year, public schools in Rwanda reopened for in-person learning in late February. Once that occurred, Gardens for Health International resumed a number of activities, including its Home Grown School Feeding field activities with the UN World Food Programme with school garden harvesting and trainings with teachers and local leaders. The organization's One Pot One Hour cooking demonstrations for students resumed recently as well.

The Maternal Nutrition Program has continued. To date, nearly 14 total weeks of training in Gasabo District have occurred with no major setbacks, which is a welcome change after "a start-and-stop year rife with COVID restrictions," according to GHI's Executive Director, Solomon Makuza.

In Musanze District, field staff assisted health clinics in administering vaccinations for 440 mothers, and 43 support groups of program graduates completed their first cohorts of financial education and ongoing nutrition trainings.

The work continues even as GHI adapts its programs to climate change and the possibility of future pandemics. Through it all, participants celebrate how much has already been gained and the resilient connections made through GHI. To date, more than 85,000 children have received hands-on nutrition learning in Rwanda.

