

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE TITLE	Professional Umuganda at Cyanika, Burera District: An approach for combatting malnutrition.
DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 7 February 2025 10:25 GMT +02:00
CONVENED BY	DIOCESE CATHOLIC OF BYUMBA/CARITAS BYUMBA/WVR Event announced on behalf of the Convenor by: CARITAS DIOCESE OF BYUMBA. IMPLEMENTING PARTNER OF WVR Feedback published on behalf of Convenor by: DIOCESE OF BYUMBA/CARITAS BYUMBA. IMPLEMENTING PARTNER OF WVR
EVENT LANGUAGE	KINYARWANDA
HOST LOCATION	Cyanika, Rwanda
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	BURERA DISTRICT
AFFILIATIONS	WVR
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/59174/



The outcomes from Nutrition Dialogues will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on women and children and young people. Each Dialogue contributes in four distinct ways:

- Published as publicly available PDFs on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal
- Available as public data on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal “Explore Feedback” page
- Available publicly within a .xls file alongside all Feedback Form data for advanced analysis
- Synthesised into reports that cover which nutrition challenges are faced, what actions are urgently needed and how should these be taken forward – particular, in advance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, March 2025.

SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	999
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PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

245	0-11	341	12-18	309	19-29
104	30-49	0	50-74	0	75+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

564	Female	435	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
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NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

27	Children, Youth Groups and Students	23	Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)
34	Educators and Teachers	95	Faith Leaders/Faith Communities
45	Financial Institutions and Technical Partners	331	Food Producers (including farmers)
145	Healthcare Professionals	56	Indigenous Peoples
78	Information and Technology Providers	0	Large Business and Food Retailers
21	Marketing and Advertising Experts	0	National/Federal Government Officials and Representatives
15	News and Media (e.g. Journalists)	98	Parents and Caregivers
12	Science and Academia	0	Small/Medium Enterprises
19	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
0	Women's Groups	0	Other (please state)

OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Other stakeholders included Early Childhood Development caregivers, youth volunteers, local security representatives, and religious leaders who all contributed to mobilizing communities, supporting nutrition interventions, and spreading key messages.

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

The Dialogue event brought together diverse participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds, including vulnerable rural families, urban representatives, and marginalized groups. Ethnic diversity was reflected through inclusive participation from all community members. Both low-income households and local leaders shared perspectives and experiences, promoting a collaborative approach. This diversity ensured that solutions addressed the real needs of the entire community.

SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

FRAMING

The Stakeholder Dialogue was introduced by acknowledging the ongoing challenge of child stunting in Burera District, despite being one of Rwanda's food baskets. The area faces a 41% stunting rate, as per the 2020 RDHS, with key contributors including poverty, poor feeding practices, limited dietary diversity, seasonal food shortages, and insufficient hygiene and sanitation. The dialogue opened with a focus on these underlying causes, contextualized within a broader national effort to reduce stunting to 19%. Participants were reminded that while Burera produces food, a disconnect exists between food availability and nutrition, especially in vulnerable households. The introduction highlighted that child malnutrition is not solely about hunger but also about the lack of knowledge on balanced diet preparation, poor child care practices, and socio-economic barriers. It was emphasized that climate variability further affects agricultural productivity, making food insecurity and nutrition deficiencies worse during dry seasons. The community has also raised concerns about rising alcohol consumption and drug abuse, particularly among youth and some parents, which contribute indirectly to neglect and malnutrition in children. The framing of the Dialogue created a sense of urgency, using evidence from recent rehabilitation efforts showing over 10,000 children recovered from malnutrition in just four months. This illustrated that when communities work together through structured interventions—like Professional Umuganda—tangible results can be achieved. The Dialogue served as a call for unity, responsibility, and collaboration. Participants were encouraged to see themselves not just as observers but as active contributors to change. The presence of government officials, development partners, and community leaders provided hope and accountability.

NUTRITION SITUATION PRESENTATION

<https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Cyanika-Event-Professional-umuganda-PDF.pdf>

DISCUSSION

The main discussion topic focused on effective community-based strategies to reduce child stunting and malnutrition in Burera District. Open-ended questions included: What are the root causes of malnutrition in our communities? How can community engagement, like Professional Umuganda, improve nutrition? What role can each stakeholder play in sustaining the fight against stunting? How do we ensure rehabilitation efforts reach all vulnerable children?

SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

Participants highlighted several nutrition challenges affecting children and families in Burera District. Despite being a food-producing area, the district still faces a high rate of child stunting (41% as per RDHS 2020). Key challenges include:

Poor dietary diversity: Families often rely on a limited number of food items, leading to micronutrient deficiencies in children.

Poverty and food insecurity: Low income levels hinder access to diverse and nutritious foods.

Lack of awareness: Many caregivers lack knowledge about balanced diets, food preparation, and hygiene practices.

Alcohol and substance abuse: Community sensitization revealed that alcoholism among parents contributes to food neglect and poor care for children.

Limited access to sanitation and hygiene: Poor hygiene increases vulnerability to infections that worsen malnutrition.

Climate-related challenges: Seasonal variations affect food availability and household nutrition.

Delayed rehabilitation: Some children are identified as malnourished but don't receive timely and consistent nutritional rehabilitation.

The Dialogue acknowledged these barriers and emphasized the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration—linking health services, agriculture, local government, and community groups—to create long-term solutions for better nutrition outcomes.

URGENT ACTIONS

Participants identified several urgent actions needed to combat malnutrition and stunting in Burera District. Key among them were:

Scaling up community education on balanced diets and hygiene, using existing platforms like Umuganda, churches, and ECD centers to reach parents and caregivers.

Rehabilitation of malnourished children: Establishing regular follow-up systems in health centers and community health workers (CHWs) to monitor nutritional progress and provide counseling.

Establishing household-level solutions, including vegetable gardens, fruit tree planting, and the provision of domestic animals (e.g., cows, goats) to improve access to animal-sourced food.

Promoting behavior change by sensitizing parents against alcohol and substance abuse, and encouraging fathers to be more engaged in child nutrition.

Strengthening Professional Umuganda as an integrated model that includes food demonstrations, house and latrine construction, and food distribution to vulnerable families.

Enhanced multi-sectoral collaboration: Local authorities, partners like WVR and Caritas Byumba, and community members committed to a joint accountability model for better implementation.

Increased community contribution through food sharing for ECD centers, ensuring that children receive nutritious meals during their formative years.

To move forward, the participants proposed stronger coordination between local government, civil society, and development partners, periodic evaluations of nutrition programs, and continued high-level advocacy to secure political will and community ownership.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

During the Dialogue, most participants shared a common understanding of the seriousness of malnutrition and the urgency to act. However, some differences in opinion emerged regarding the approaches to sustainability and accountability.

For example, while some stakeholders emphasized the need for immediate food provision and increased donations to vulnerable families, others pushed for more sustainable, long-term solutions, such as promoting home gardens and empowering families economically. There was also divergence on who should lead the change—some believed the government should remain the main driver, while others emphasized community-based leadership and local ownership.

Discussions also brought forward varying perspectives on resource mobilization. Some local leaders expressed concerns over limited budgets, while partners highlighted the importance of community contributions, especially through mechanisms like Professional Umuganda and food-sharing at ECD centers.

Despite these differences, the Dialogue remained respectful and productive, as participants found common ground in the shared goal of reducing child stunting and improving nutrition outcomes. In the end, all actors agreed on the importance of collaboration, continued engagement, and leveraging available community resources to implement agreed-upon strategies.

OVERALL SUMMARY

On February 7, 2025, a highly impactful Stakeholder Dialogue took place in Burera District, Northern Province of Rwanda. Organized by World Vision Rwanda in collaboration with Caritas Byumba and other partners, the event was a key step in the official launch of the Professional Umuganda initiative, aimed at accelerating efforts to reduce child stunting and malnutrition. The Dialogue created space for open conversation, learning, and collective planning among a wide range of actors including government officials, local authorities, civil society organizations, community health workers, and the local community.

The Dialogue was set within the broader context of Burera's persistent high rates of stunting, despite its status as a food-producing region. According to the 2020 Rwanda Demographic Health Survey, the district had a stunting prevalence of 41%. This urgent nutrition concern served as the entry point for discussions, motivating all participants to unite around a shared goal: bringing the rate down to at least 19%, in alignment with national targets.

The day began with field visits and community-based activities, including the rehabilitation of a vulnerable family's house, construction of vegetable gardens and latrines, feeding sessions for children, sensitization against drug abuse, and distribution of domestic animals. These hands-on activities were not just symbolic but served to demonstrate the practical implementation of the concepts discussed. They provided a vivid backdrop for the conversations and gave participants a real sense of what change looks like when communities take ownership.

Throughout the Dialogue, nutrition was addressed as a multi-dimensional challenge, linked not only to food availability, but also to education, hygiene, social behavior, gender roles, and local governance. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of community participation, particularly through culturally relevant platforms like Umuganda, as a means of building sustainable solutions from the ground up.

High-level government representatives, including the Minister of State for Regional Cooperation, used the moment to underline the inter-generational impact of malnutrition, framing child well-being as foundational to national development. His passionate remarks reinforced the idea that feeding and protecting children today secures the prosperity of the country tomorrow.

World Vision Rwanda's National Director, Pauline Okumu, provided a compelling case for rehabilitation, citing recovery statistics from their nutrition programming and calling for even deeper collaboration among all stakeholders. Her intervention was grounded in evidence and aligned with the lived experiences shared by community members during the event.

From a facilitation perspective, the event struck a strong balance between formal presentations, technical exchanges, and interactive, grassroots-level engagement. Participants actively contributed ideas, challenged assumptions, and listened to each other respectfully. There was a genuine sense of urgency, but also hope—hope that through joint effort and commitment, the tide of malnutrition can indeed be reversed.

Key topics of discussion included:

The local causes of malnutrition, including poor dietary diversity, inadequate hygiene, and substance abuse.

The critical role of parents and caregivers in shaping children's health outcomes.

The need to scale up Professional Umuganda across all sectors of the district.

Strategies to improve access to nutritious food through local farming and household gardens.

Building a culture of accountability and ownership in nutrition programming.

While differing viewpoints occasionally surfaced—particularly around resource allocation and responsibility—the overall tone of the Dialogue was constructive and forward-looking. The presence of multiple partners and government leaders lent political and institutional weight to the commitments made during the event.

The event felt energizing, unifying, and deeply human. It was more than a meeting—it was a shared experience of learning, reflection, and resolve. The blending of dialogue with tangible community action created a powerful narrative: that fighting malnutrition is not only possible, but it starts with the will of the people and the cooperation of all sectors.

As Burera District continues its journey toward improved nutrition outcomes, the Dialogue has helped lay a strong foundation. It brought clarity to challenges, consensus to solutions, and inspiration to the people committed to making change happen.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Dialogue strongly reflected the Principles of Engagement, particularly inclusivity, transparency, and shared commitment. The organizing team ensured balanced representation from all relevant stakeholder groups, including government, civil society, health professionals, and community members from both rural and urban backgrounds. Prior to the event, facilitators were briefed on the participant list and guided on how to manage competing interests through neutral and respectful moderation techniques. Efforts were made to create a safe space for dialogue, where participants could speak freely and all views were respected. No financial disclosures were required, but transparency was maintained through open discussions about each partner's role and contributions. The use of real-life examples during the Professional Umuganda activities encouraged joint reflection and alignment.

METHOD AND SETTING

The Dialogue was convened using a community-based participatory approach, combining structured discussion with demonstrative activities under the Professional Umuganda model. It included inclusive stakeholder engagement, open-ended discussions, and field-based observation. The setting was informal and outdoor, taking place in villages within Burera District where various practical activities—like cooking demos, latrine building, and nutrition education—were showcased.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

Engage community leaders early to build trust and ensure broad participation. Use clear, simple language and culturally relevant examples to connect with participants. Combine discussions with practical demonstrations to make nutrition concepts tangible. Facilitate inclusive conversations that value all voices. Prepare facilitators thoroughly and have a clear follow-up plan. Flexibility and respect for local customs enhance engagement and ownership, making the dialogue impactful and sustainable.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank Caritas Byumba, World Vision Rwanda, and all partners for their unwavering support in organizing this Dialogue. Special appreciation goes to local authorities, health workers, volunteers, and community members whose commitment made this event successful. We also acknowledge the Ministry of State for Regional Cooperation and all stakeholders for their leadership and collaboration. Their collective efforts are vital in advancing the fight against child malnutrition in Burera.

RELEVANT LINKS

- **LINK 1**
<https://x.com/CByumba/status/1887954403606295014>
- **LINK 2**
<https://x.com/CByumba/status/1887955624845345132>
- **LINK 3**
<https://x.com/CByumba/status/1887957962657767849>
- **LINK 4**
<https://x.com/CByumba/status/1887960098812710996>

ATTACHMENTS

- **PHOTO**
<https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2b695d7c-f115-4fb6-8832-c6effd8644a3.jpg>
- **PHOTO**
<https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/3f0cadbd-872d-446d-af0e-4e6844d85a60.jpg>
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