

The Nutrition Dialogue focused on strengthening early identification and community action to prevent malnutrition among children under five in Gicumbi District. The activity was conducted through the Professional Umuganda by Caritas Byumba, in collaboration with World Vision Rwanda and Gicumbi District, following the three-day Positive Deviance Hearth (PDH) Model Approach training held from 26–28 August 2026 at Centre d’Accueil FIAT.

Following the training, participants were encouraged to translate the knowledge gained into practical community action. One key action was screening children under five across all sectors of Gicumbi District. The trained health actors subsequently shared the knowledge with Community Health Workers (CHWs), who are supporting the screening under the supervision of relevant health actors where possible.

The Dialogue highlighted the importance of early identification of nutrition, health and developmental concerns. Through screening, children who may be at risk can be identified earlier and linked to appropriate support, including counselling, follow-up, referral, rehabilitation or other necessary services. Participants recognized that early action can help prevent nutrition and health challenges from becoming more serious.

The discussion also emphasized that screening should be accompanied by continued support at household and community level. Families and caregivers need information and encouragement to provide children with diverse and nutritious foods, monitor their growth, seek care early when concerns arise, follow referrals and maintain good hygiene and sanitation practices.

Participants reflected on challenges that may affect effective screening and follow-up, including limited access to services for families living in rural or hard-to-reach areas, delayed care-seeking and difficulties in ensuring continued follow-up after children are identified. These challenges reinforced the importance of CHWs, health workers, local leaders and community actors in bringing services and information closer to families.

Overall, the Dialogue felt practical, participatory and focused on action. Participants were able to connect the PDH training with the realities faced by families in their communities and discuss how they could contribute to identifying and supporting children at risk. The involvement of CHWs was particularly important because they are close to households and can help strengthen early identification, community follow-up and links with health services.

The expansion of the initiative from the initial focus in Kageyo and Mutete to all sectors of Gicumbi was recognized as an important step toward reaching more children and families. It reflects a shared commitment among Caritas Byumba, World Vision Rwanda, Gicumbi District, health actors and communities to strengthen collective action against malnutrition.

The Dialogue reinforced that preventing malnutrition requires continuous action rather than a one-time intervention. Regular screening, community education, timely referral, follow-up and collaboration among stakeholders are essential to ensure that children receive support when it is needed. By strengthening the capacity of CHWs and connecting community action with health and nutrition services, the initiative is helping bring prevention and early response closer to families and supporting children to grow and develop well.