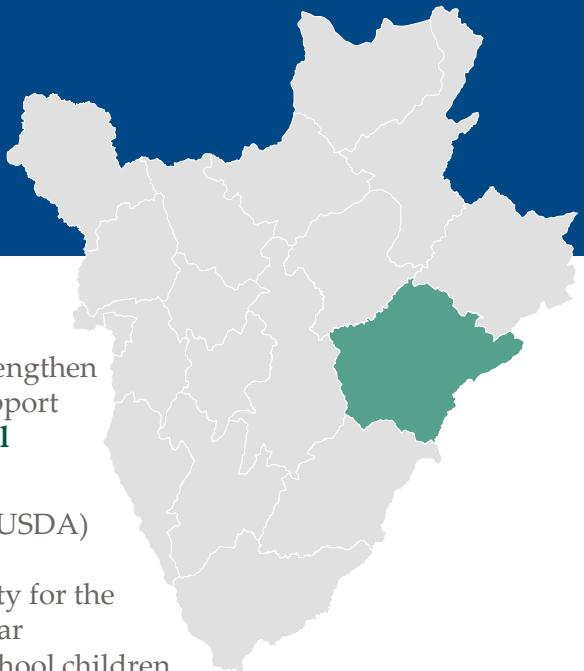


BIGEBOSE “EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL” BASELINE EVALUATION

A McGovern-Dole International: Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Burundi



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Bigebose “Every Child in School” is a five-year project that seeks to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Burundi to deliver activities that support **improved literacy, health, nutrition, and well-being of primary school children in Burundi’s Ruyigi province**.

The project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program and implemented by Catholic Relief Services, BAFASHEBIGE, and Solidarity for the Promotion of Assistance and Development (SOPRAD). Over its five-year implementation period, Bigebose seeks to reach an estimated 801 preschool children and 60,012 primary school children in 100 schools in all seven communes of Ruyigi. It supports two strategic objectives: (1) improved literacy of school-going children and (2) increased use of health and dietary practices.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

In June 2023, School-to-School International and the Innovative Hub for Research in Africa conducted a baseline performance evaluation to provide a detailed portrait of how Bigebose interventions affect students and their school environment. This was the first of three evaluation points for the project.



The baseline evaluation established measures of student literacy and the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices for grade 2 students in 52 public schools across the Ruyigi province. It also established measures for key indicators of the project.

EVALUATION TOOLS

Tools for the baseline evaluation included a reading assessment, two observations, and three surveys. The Innovative Hub for Research in Africa also conducted key informant interviews about the project’s relevance and sustainability with key personnel from partner organizations.

Annual Status of Education Report	Classroom Observation	School Observation	Student Survey	School Director Survey	Parent Survey	Key Informant Interview
Assesses student performance in an untimed test of basic reading skills	Documents details related to student engagement, teaching practices, materials, and student attendance	Documents details about school-level infrastructure, such as facilities, resources, and meal preparation	Gathers details on reading activities, school safety, access to toilets, and hygiene conditions	Gathers details on parental involvement and the availability of sanitation resources	Gathers details on sanitation and hygiene practices, home environments, and nutrition knowledge	Provides perceptions from partner organizations concerning the project’s relevance and sustainability

FINDINGS FROM THE BASELINE

Literacy

Health

Nutrition

Well-being

Percent of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level Kirundi text

9.7%
of Girls

8.3%
of Boys

Percent of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level French text

0.2%
of Girls

0.2%
of Boys

Percent of people who can cite the three critical moments for washing their hands

59.3%
of Students

Percent of children absent last week due to a health-related problem

71.2%
of Students

Percent of schools that are managing and disposing of waste safely and in an environmentally-sound manner

60.7%
of Schools

Number of schools with improved sanitation facilities

45
of 52 Schools

INSIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Key Informant Interviews engaged personnel from the Communal and Provincial Education Directorates, SOPRAD, BAFASHEBIGE, and the National Directorate of School Canteens to identify stakeholder perceptions of the project's relevance and sustainability.



Respondents had **mixed perceptions of the quality of education** in Ruyigi. They reported multiple factors that affected educational quality, including teacher absences, poor infrastructure, poor quality of school governance and teaching, and lack of teaching and learning materials.



Multiple factors were cited as **obstacles to children enrolling and attending school**: poverty impedes some families from sending their children to school; parents may not understand the importance of education; education is devalued by some because community youth remain unemployed after graduating.

Percent of children reporting being hungry while at school at least one-time last week

80.8%
of Girls

74.5%
of Boys

Percent of school-going children with low body mass index (or underweight) in the target area

19.9%
of Girls

22.7%
of Boys

Average student attendance rate in USDA supported classrooms or schools

86.2%
of Girls

83.1%
of Boys

Percent of students in target schools identified as attentive during class or instruction

69.2%
of Students

Number of schools using an improved water source

26
of 52 Schools

Percent of schools implementing activities for parents

96.2%
of Schools



Respondents described the **gender-related obstacles that girls face** in accessing education, including ignorance on the importance of girls' education, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, myriad household duties, and lengthy absences related to menstruation.

Respondents are **hopeful about the impact that the Bigebose project** would make in schools and communities, with many noting that all project activities would be equally effective.

Respondents said that **sustainability stood out as a significant challenge** to the Bigebose project and suggested strategies for ensuring sustainability, including training local beneficiaries and implementing partners, working collaboratively as a project consortium, and being fair and transparent about project implementation and outcomes.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The results of the Bigebose project study establish a baseline for future evaluations to be conducted at the midline and endline stages of the project. These future assessments will gauge the project's impact on students' progress in fundamental reading skills, health, and hygiene.

The project's first strategic objective focuses on the improved literacy of school-aged children. The project used an ASER assessment to measure the percentage of students who, at the end of second grade, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of a grade-level text (McGovern-Dole Indicator #1). The baseline ASER assessment was administered in Kirundi and French to 510 grade 2 students. Students completed ASER levels, including a reading comprehension section with five questions about a text they read. Based on scores from that assessment, students' reading comprehension levels in Kirundi and French were limited.

Only 9.0 percent of students demonstrated an understanding of the Kirundi text. The proportion of students who grasped the meaning of grade-level French text—0.2 percent—was even smaller. Additionally, more than 90 percent of students struggled to read French letters.

These conclusions underscore the need for targeted and comprehensive literacy interventions to address the substantial disparities in language comprehension among second-grade students.

The project recognizes that students need strong teachers, classrooms, and schools to improve their literacy skills. On the day of data collection, 50 out of the 52 schools surveyed maintained logbooks to record daily teacher attendance.

On average, teacher attendance was high: 90.9 percent attendance was observed across the sampled schools. Furthermore, 100 percent of school directors confirmed that their schools had a School Management Committee (SMC), and 92.0 percent provided SMC meeting minutes. Additionally, 96.0 percent of school directors reported that their SMC was actively engaged in parent-outreach activities.

The project's second strategic objective focuses on health, nutrition, and dietary practices. To measure this, the baseline evaluation used classroom and school observation forms to examine the condition of water and sanitation facilities at the sampled schools.

Among the 52 observed schools, 45 (86.5 percent) had improved sanitation facilities, including flush or pour-flush toilets, pit latrines with slabs, composting toilets, or ventilated improved pit latrines. A smaller proportion of schools—8 out of 52 sampled schools (15.5 percent)—were equipped with handwashing stations. Regarding access to drinking water, 26 schools (50 percent) had access to water sources. However, only 22 schools (42.3 percent) sourced water from an "improved source," such as piped water, a public tap or standpipe, a tube well or borehole, a protected dug well or spring, or rainwater collection.

Much like the literacy findings, the results indicate room for improvement in promoting proper hygiene practices.

These findings provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of student literacy, teacher attendance, school management, water, and sanitation facilities at the sampled schools. They also highlight areas where interventions will help meet the project's objectives.

For more information about the project....