

HOW D.P.I. WORKERS CAN HELP THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN NUTRITION/AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

For educational institutions, nutrition/agriculture education simply involves teaching and learning about food. That is, growing food, storing food, buying food, cooking food and how our bodies use the food we eat.

This article outlines how D.P.I. officers can help Schools, Vocational Centres and Colleges, especially in growing food.

WHAT ARE SCHOOLS, CENTRES AND COLLEGES SUPPOSED TO DO?

Theory is important

Theory lessons on nutrition and agriculture are given in every Community School in Community Life and Health lessons; in High Schools in Home Economics, Science and Agriculture lessons; in the Vocational Centre Home Economics Courses and to a lesser extent in the Agriculture Courses; and in Teacher's Colleges in the training of teachers in Home Economics, Science, Health and Agriculture.

Practical lessons are equally important

For a practical everyday subject such as nutrition to be effectively learnt, PRACTICAL lessons also need to be conducted.



*Preparing lunch at Menyamya
Vocational Centre*

Practical gardening and cooking lessons are part of the Home Economics and Agriculture Courses.

All schools have also been asked to undertake extra nutrition activities. These include ensuring that every student eats lunch (preferably a balanced meal) every day, and

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A school lunch time

having a good school, centre or college garden.

School lunch: Lunch programmes vary amongst schools, centres and colleges.

Some Community Schools have an organized cooked lunch each day, some once or twice a week, some once a month. Others make sure that the children bring lunch and eat it whilst being supervised (that is, sitting together while eating lunch, not running around and playing). All schools should organise something.

Vocational Centres, High Schools and Colleges must all make sure that their students eat a balanced meal at lunch time.

School gardens: All educational institutions are supposed to have a vegetable garden. The purpose of the garden is three-fold:

1. To provide a practical situation for learning new and appropriate methods of gardening.

2. To provide food for meals at the institution.

3. To provide a working example of a good garden to the community.

All educational institutions have also been encouraged to plant fruit and nut trees around the school.

HOW CAN D.P.I. WORKERS HELP?

Each school, centre or college faces different problems when developing a garden. Decisions about all of the following have to be made. It is in these areas that D.P.I. workers can be very helpful to teachers. For example:

1. Deciding where to make a garden - where is the best soil, where is land available.
2. What is the best way to prepare the ground.
3. How to improve the soil (without the use of store bought fertilizer).



Pupils of Bainyik Community School mulching their garden

4. Where to get seeds, cuttings and seedlings to plant.
5. How to choose the best type of plant.
6. How to use composted material properly.
7. How and why to practise mixed cropping - which crops to use and why.
8. How and why to mulch a garden.
9. How and why to rotate crops and which crops to use.
10. How and why to keep seeds and cuttings for re-planting.
11. How to make a nursery.
12. How best to store harvested crops (may include building solar driers).

It will often be found that whilst some teachers may only need help in one or two of these areas, other teachers may require a lot more information.

Remember the idea is to help teachers do these things for themselves. It is better not to do everything for them.

Some important things to remember when helping teachers are:

- The garden is to provide the most nutritious variety of food possible (preferably traditional).
- The food grown is for the consumption of the students - NOT for sale. (Only when there is a surplus of food can it be sold.)
- The garden can be used as an example to the community, and thus can also be the basis of what is taught to the villagers or people near the school.

SET AN EXAMPLE TO THE COMMUNITY

By encouraging people to give an everyday thing such as 'food', a little more thought, and by encouraging people to be self sufficient in food, D.P.I.

workers can establish examples of self help to the rest of the community.

Schools cannot work in isolation. For the learning to be effective, it needs to be reinforced at many other levels. So whilst schools, with the help of D.P.I. workers, can provide an example of good gardening and self sufficiency, the same examples need to be established in the community. Then, not only will people begin to be self sufficient but they will also help to improve the nutritional situation in the area.

A NOTE FROM JOE KOPAPA, (ASSISTANT SECRETARY, AGRICULTURE EDUCATION AND TRAINING BRANCH, D.P.I., KONE DOBU)

Agricultural Extension Officers are in fact teachers in the community. In order to be successful, an A.E.O. must extend his knowledge and advice to as many people as possible in his area.

Working through schools is a very good way of reaching many farmers and village families, via their children, especially in rural areas.

Therefore we support this article and agree that every field officer should work closely with the schools.