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School Gardens for Nutrition and Food Security: Case Study from Switzerland, Ethiopia, Peru and Myanmar

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Abstract

More and more schools all over the world are using gardens to teach and foster different skills. However, literature on the impacts of school gardens is still scant and scattered.

This study investigates the impact of school garden programs can have on children looking at impact domain of Nutrition and food security, civic participation, and Environmental Consciousness.

Eleven selected key-experts, who work as teachers or coordinators of school gardens in Switzerland, Ethiopia, Peru and Myanmar, and who facilitated their respective projects have been interviewed. Students' drawings have been analysed to consider the view of the school children involved in the programs. The Food and Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) and the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) were used to evaluate nutrition and food security. The level of knowledge and practice in the four countries has been compared to the specific situation of the gardens involved in the research. Observations and questionnaires in Ethiopia and Peru have proven to be useful tools to assess the positive impact the school gardens have on the children's diet. Children enrolled in such programs are less likely to drop out of school. Inexpensive and easy to handle tools as the FIES which can be conducted or completed by any member of a household in a written or oral form are very interesting and require little resources, but delivers key information on a household or even more differentiated results between inhabitants of the same household.

The results show that school gardens have a positive influence overall on all the impact domains, but they often lack tangible proof to promote their concept and objectives. In order to face this issue, it would be necessary to promote connections between the school gardens worldwide and to promote and define some common impact measurement tools, which could be implemented regardless of the location. The projects often face the same problems and are individually creating tools and methods that cater to the specific context of their school garden, rather than developing universal school garden assessment methods together.

Keywords: FIES, food security, impact assessment, nutrition, PoU, school garden

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