

# A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL MEALS

## Measuring Progress and Planning for Sustainability Readiness

AUGUST 2017

### THE GOAL: LONG TERM LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Since 2001, Project Concern International (PCI) has served as a continual USDA Food for Education (FFE) implementing partner. Through each program, PCI has developed the capacities of local communities and government offices to improve the educational environment for schoolchildren and generate the participation and commitment of the local community. This process includes complementary activities such as the development of leadership skills within parent-teacher associations and income-generating activities for vulnerable families to keep children in school. PCI's current and recent Food for Education programs in **Nicaragua, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Tanzania** have reached over **1 million students** and yielded many achievements, especially in the areas of building community and local government support to ensure the sustainability of activities and outcomes. Through experiences across these four countries, PCI has created and refined tools and approaches to measure and intentionally plan for sustainability, resulting in an integrated approach to sustainability programming. The ultimate goal is to ensure that schools are able to maintain positive nutrition and literacy outcomes once the project ends.



A student enjoying her school meal in PCI's Nicaragua program

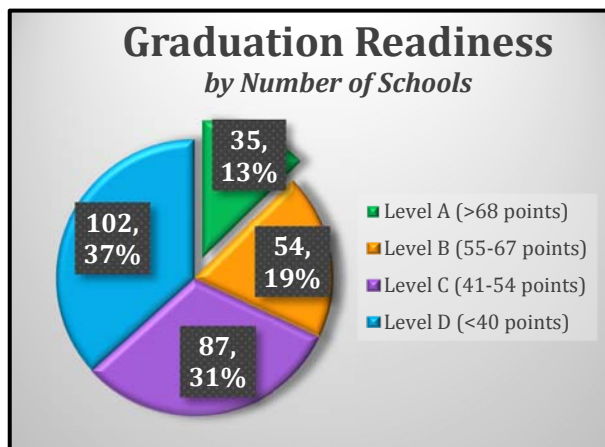
### THE APPROACH: SCHOOL- LEVEL SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Over the years, PCI has developed a key set of tools that can be adapted to each country's unique context to help with both measurement and timely implementation of capacity building activities, as well as to ensure steady progress toward local management of school meal programming. A key tool developed and utilized in each of PCI's current FFE programs is the Sustainability Readiness Tool, which measures each school's progress toward graduation readiness. The tool is implemented on a regular basis (quarterly or annually) with key stakeholders to ensure they are engaged in the monitoring process.

The results generated from the Sustainability Readiness Tool allow PCI to classify schools according to their graduation readiness (see an example below). Based on classification levels, PCI supports the development of Sustainability Plans at each school with local stakeholders including government, community, & school leadership. Implementation of these tools and planning processes enables progress tracking, facilitates consultative planning, shared goals and expectations, allows for adjustment at crucial moments, and ensures that key stakeholders are engaged and take ownership.

It also allows PCI to tailor interventions at the government, community, and school levels based on their readiness level.

The tools are adapted to each country's unique context, with custom goals and score weighting. This flexibility and tailoring process enables local ownership and ensures tools are locally appropriate.



### SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESSES:

**BOLIVIA:** In Bolivia, 49 municipal governments (covering 15% of the country) have graduated from PCI's Food for Education program since 2005. The local governments were trained by PCI to procure food from local markets, ensure proper storage and handling, and conduct program monitoring at the school level. Today they continue to provide daily meals to over 110,600 children with local resources.

**GUATEMALA:** PCI has established Sustainability Commissions in participating municipalities as a mechanism to convene key municipal and community level stakeholders to provide leadership for sustaining school meals as well as the complementary activities in the long-term. Among other achievements, the Commissions have been successful in securing the commitment of two municipalities to incorporate funding for school meals into their annual budgets. The goal is to secure commitment from all four participating municipalities to incorporate funding for school meals into budgets by the end of the project.

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Parent volunteers in PCI's Guatemala school meal program

## PCI'S SUSTAINABILITY READINESS TOOL

PCI's Sustainability Readiness Tool tracks five domains which, based on PCI's knowledge and expertise, are critical to assessing each school's readiness to graduate from external support to local ownership. While PCI and local stakeholders adapt the tool and activities by country and context, the five categories that contribute to sustainability (listed below) remain largely the same:

- 1) Daily School Breakfast Provided to 100% of students
- 2) Improvements in Student Literacy
- 3) Hygiene and Nutrition Practices
- 4) Adequate Infrastructure
- 5) Government and Community Capacity and Support

A 2017 testing of PCI's Sustainability Readiness Tool by an external evaluator in Guatemala found that it effectively tracks which communities are on the road to graduation, and the tool's scores correlated with information collected through the evaluation.

## SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESSES:

**TANZANIA:** In Tanzania local stakeholders collaborated closely in building their sustainability goals. Currently, farmers and schools are partnering to increase and enhance food production and nutrition for thousands of students. Through community and school garden production from October 2016-June 2017, and despite drought and pest challenges, 27 MT of food was produced in school gardens and an additional 12MT was donated by parents and farmer groups. Over the next five years, the number of locally-produced meals will steadily increase as local capacity is strengthened and production is increased at both the school and community levels.

**NICARAGUA:** PCI has steadily increased the Ministry of Education's (MOE) capacity to assess and manage school feeding operations. A key result is a large increase in the number of food distribution points, shortening commodity delivery time by up to two months and reducing commodity losses. Currently, the MOE is covering 100% of commodity transport costs and approximately 14% of commodities for PCI's FFE program. PCI is working to gradually increase the MOE's support to targeted communities over the Life of the Project.



Angelina Julia, a 53-year old mother of seven children and 11 grandchildren, is a smallholder maize farmer in Tanzania. Angelina leads a group of 23 other local smallholder farmers. One of Angelina's grandchildren is a student at Nyabehu Primary School, one of the schools supported by PCI's USDA-funded Food for Education program. She actively ensures that her earnings and harvest from the farmers' group directly contribute to her grandchild's education.

Last year, Nyabehu Primary School received 150 kilograms of maize donated by Angelina's farmer group, which is combined with beans to prepare a traditional meal called "Makande." The Makande meal is served once a week to all students and teachers, while the PCI/USDA-provided bean and rice meals are served four times a week. The number of locally-produced meals will continually increase as farmers grow in their capacity to contribute to schools in their communities.

*"The key to a successful, sustainable school feeding program is transparency and trust among the school, school committee, village government, and parents."*

- Tanzania Food for Education Stakeholder Meeting Participant