**Challenge**

Healthy school meals are an essential component for student success, helping students perform well, remain focused and thrive both inside and outside the classroom. In many parts of Tanzania, though, primary schools are not able to provide students with this important source of nutrition. What’s more, many children in these under-resourced communities do not receive breakfast at home. The lack of school meals negatively impacts students’ capacity to pay attention to their teachers and cause many to return home for a meal before the end of the school day, missing crucial lessons. Some even stay at home and miss the remainder of the day’s instruction.

**Solution**

Since 2010, PCI has partnered with the Government of Tanzania and local communities to implement the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-funded school feeding programs in the Bunda, Musoma and Butiama Districts of Tanzania’s Mara Region. PCI currently implements both the USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (MGD) program, called FFE III, in 231 primary schools, and the USDA Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement (LRP) program, called Chakula Chetu (“Our Food” in Swahili), in 16 primary schools.
Earlier phases of the MGD program (FFE I and FFE II) provided daily school meals five times a week with USDA-donated commodities. However, FFE III’s program design, which was developed in partnership with program stakeholders from all levels (national, regional and local), centered around a gradual transition from donor support to a locally led sustainable school feeding program. As the number of commodities donated by USDA decreased over the life of the program, locally contributed commodities increased to ensure the continued provision of daily school meals. To date, the 247 program-supported schools have served over 31,943,928 healthy meals to students prepared with school and community contributed foods.

**Results**

Improved school coordination, community participation and ownership is seen across the program intervention area: parents, guardians, teachers, and school administrators are working closely together to build kitchens, pay cooks and security guards, and tend to the school gardens and school farms. As of January 2020, program schools are no longer receiving USDA donated commodities, and the provision of daily school meals relies solely on school and community contributions—an exciting step for program sustainability as sustainable school feeding was not practiced in the Mara Region before PCI’s programs started. The Head Teacher of Muranda ‘A’ Primary School noted this positive trend toward local ownership by saying, “In the first year of the program, the community contribution was very poor or zero as opposed to now.’

Building off PCI’s global experience in sustainable programming, PCI/ Tanzania developed the Sustainable Community Ownership Model (SCOM). This now-popular approach in Tanzania gives schools and communities the tools to plan and coordinate their efforts to develop and maintain self-reliant school feeding programs, while encouraging parents and guardians to initiate their own involvement. The innovative model was initially piloted in 81 program-supported schools in March 2019 and has since been rolled out to all 247 MGD and LRP supported primary schools. SCOM has led to an increase in community contributed food commodities for school meals. For example, in 2018, Muranda ‘A’ reported zero community contributions. However, one year after the introduction of SCOM, parents and community members contributed a total of 1,825 kilograms (kg) of maize, 365 kg of beans and 182.5 liters of cooking oil from October 2019 to March 2020.

Another positive example of the transition to a locally owned school feeding program can also be seen at Sanzate Primary School. At the start of the program in 2011, the community surrounding Sanzate Primary School was very reluctant to contribute food to schools as they felt it was the responsibility of the donor, not parents, to provide school meals. However, through FFE III’s focus on community engagement and sensitization meetings on program sustainability, parent involvement and engagement has increased and the partnership between the school and community has strengthened. To provide daily school meals to all 678 students from January 2018 to December 2019, Sanzate Primary...
Recognizing that the responsibility of school feeding programs cannot rely solely on parents and schools, PCI has partnered with the Government of Tanzania to identify roles across various stakeholder levels (national, regional and local). In addition to SCOM, PCI has also created innovative communication and sensitization strategies to further strengthen relationships among key government, school and community actors who are committed to work together to support their children. For example, PCI has leveraged support from various stakeholder groups to further build local ownership of the school feeding program, including influential leaders’ meetings, learning exchange visits, special school feeding day events, community “Champions” and Government-Parent-Teacher-Associations. These roles, responsibilities and expectations for how program stakeholders and key actors can support the sustainability of the school feeding program are documented and embedded in schools’ Sustainability Action Plans, which are community-centered and involve all relevant actors.

As a result of SCOM, many other communities are showing similar success in moving towards a sustainable, locally managed school feeding program. Total contributions from parents, communities and school garden and farm harvests from all 231 program-supported schools have shown significant increase after PCI rolled out SCOM in 2019. In 2018, 167 MTs of food were contributed for school meals, while in 2019, there was an almost 50% increase, with 311 MTs contributed for school meals. Parent contributions continue to increase as well. Between September to December 2019, parents contributed a total of 50 MTs of food commodities to schools, and from January to March 2020, parents donated an additional 86 MTs of food for school meals.

Future Directions

Recognizing that the responsibility of school feeding programs cannot rely solely on parents and schools, PCI has partnered with the Government of Tanzania to identify roles across various stakeholder levels (national, regional and local). In addition to SCOM, PCI has also created innovative communication and sensitization strategies to further strengthen relationships among key government, school and community actors who are committed to work together to support their children. For example, PCI has leveraged support from various stakeholder groups to further build local ownership of the school feeding program, including influential leaders’ meetings, learning exchange visits, special school feeding day events, community “Champions” and Government-Parent-Teacher-Associations. These roles, responsibilities and expectations for how program stakeholders and key actors can support the sustainability of the school feeding program are documented and embedded in schools’ Sustainability Action Plans, which are community-centered and involve all relevant actors.

Through experience and success in transitioning ownership of school feeding programs within the program area to local communities, PCI’s integrated school feeding approach has become a model at regional and national levels. At the request of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, PCI is providing technical leadership in the development of the National School Feeding Guidelines that will guide future nationwide replication of school feeding programs. Using PCI’s 10 years of experience in the Mara Region, PCI is helping to inform the rollout for self-reliant school feeding programs across Tanzania. Additionally, in February 2020, PCI supported the Mara Region to develop its first Regional School Feeding Strategy that will oversee the implementation of sustainable school feeding programs in all districts of the Mara Region. The Mara Regional School Feeding Strategy document is currently in the final stage of approval. This strategic document clearly informs each council within the Mara Region to set aside a school feeding budget for planning, mobilization, monitoring and supervision of school feeding.

A student demonstrates reading on the blackboard at Wariku Primary School. Photo: Winfrenda Edward/PCI Tanzania