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How extensive is World Veg's work in West Africa and what is it composed of?

WorldVeg has two regional centers in West Africa, one in Mali (on the ICRISAT campus near Bamako) and one in Benin (on the IITA campus in Cotonou). Currently we also have projects in Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso (but only few staff in these countries). Some topics that we are working on in West Africa include strengthening vegetable seed systems, agrobiodiversity of traditional vegetables, safe vegetable production in peri-urban areas, diversifying crop production systems with home gardens, and raising consumer demand for vegetables in urban and peri-urban areas. Please have a look at these web sites:

<http://avrdc.org/about-avrdc/new-locations/west-central-africa/>

<http://avrdc.org/about-avrdc/new-locations/west-central-africa-coastal-humid-regions/>

How successful were the school gardens in diversifying meals in the school?

Yes, this could potentially be a good impact pathway, although we need to realize that for most schools the gardens produce only small (and irregular) quantities of vegetables. Our sample in Nepal included only a few schools that were covered by the Nepal School Meals Program and we were therefore unable to analyze this.

The take-home message is to always promote BOTH for higher adoption of household vegetable eating, correct?

I would say that the take-home message is that for school gardens to have an impact on children's diets, they need to make healthier foods more available in children's homes and nudge parents to serve healthier foods, which can be achieved through a home garden intervention. I would be hesitant to always recommend both without knowing the local context.

How did you select schools for this initiative?

We first selected the district in Nepal where we wanted to work and then worked with the local district education office to create a list of 52 schools that were suitable for setting up a school garden. All these schools were visited initially to confirm their interest and suitability. We then selected 15 schools randomly for the intervention group (those that received the school garden) and another 15 schools as a control (we only collected data, but did not implement the school gardens; however, they received school garden support after the data collection was completed).

The idea of teachers following up parents at home is very innovative. Was it difficult for the school administration to authorize that teachers spend their time in this manner?

Teachers did not spend their working time on doing this. They visited the parents on Saturdays during the weekend. We paid them to give them an incentive to do this. I have not heard any feedback that school principals were unhappy with that. I think that they were supportive of this.