

A kitchen garden programme in Musanze is helping households grow nutritious vegetables and prepare balanced meals as part of efforts to reduce childhood stunting in the district.

The initiative, implemented by Yalla Yalla Group Ltd in partnership with the Embassy of Israel in Rwanda and Musanze District, is being rolled out through the Sustainable Health and Improved Nutrition for Everyone (SHINE) Project.

Israel's Ambassador Einat Weiss, commissioned demonstration kitchen gardens in Kimonyi and Nkotsi sectors on September 24, as the programme seeks to equip families with practical skills to improve household nutrition.



Israel's Ambassador to Rwanda Einat Weiss

The project is also taking its nutrition message directly to young children. During a visit to an early childhood development (ECD) centre in Kampanga, Cell, Kinigi Sector, Yalla Yalla provided meals to 336 children, linking its work in food production with efforts to improve child nutrition.

Theobald Kayiranga, Musanze District Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs said the district's stunting rate currently stands at 31.9% but aims to bring down the rate to below 15% by 2029, from 45.9% recorded about five years ago.

The programme initially covers five sectors — Nkotsi, Muko, Kimonyi, Busogo and Kinigi — with plans to expand to all 15 sectors of the district.



Beyond encouraging households to grow vegetables, the initiative teaches parents and caregivers how to prepare balanced meals using available foods at home. Residents are also trained to share the gardening practices with other families, creating a community-based approach to spreading the programme.

Emmanuel Ndayizeye, the CEO of Yalla Yalla said, 50 people — 10 from each of the five participating sectors — have been trained as kitchen garden promoters. At least 350 children have also been reached through lessons on balanced diets involving their parents.

“We call them kitchen garden promoters because we need them to take these skills down to their villages,” Ndayizeye said.

He said the project is expected to run for five years and could eventually be expanded beyond Musanze. The trained promoters, he added, will help spread the practices beyond the demonstration gardens and reach more households.



According to Ndayizeye, about \$100,000 has been contributed to the programme by Yalla Yalla, the Embassy of Israel and Musanze District.

Kayiranga said tackling stunting requires more than increasing food production, noting that some households sell much of what they harvest without retaining enough for family consumption.

He also pointed to limited dietary diversity and inadequate meal preparation as factors that can affect children’s nutrition.

“Eliminating stunting means growing vegetables so that children can eat vegetables, and ensuring that their parents prepare balanced diets for them,” he said.



Nzabonimpa Emmanuel, a resident of Kimonyi said, the programme had taught him the importance of properly spacing vegetables. He said families could establish similar gardens using simple materials such as sacks or old basins filled with soil and manure.

Ambassador Weiss said the project is also introducing agricultural practices from Israel, particularly drip irrigation, seed selection and improved planting techniques.

She said farmers do not necessarily need expensive equipment to improve water use, pointing to simple irrigation systems that deliver water directly to plant roots.

The ambassador added that the embassy is working with the Ministry of Education on similar agricultural activities in two schools around Kigali and plans to support a comparable initiative in a refugee camp.

With the project planned for five years, trained kitchen garden promoters are expected to remain a key link between the demonstration sites and households across Musanze.