

# Education **Without** Hunger

Creating Sustainable Solutions for Food Security in  
Sri Lanka

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இலங்கையில் உணவுப் பாதுகாப்பிற்கான  
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## Project Summary:

The Education Without Hunger program, launched in October 2022, is a transformative initiative addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in Sri Lanka. By empowering students, teachers, and parents with agricultural and environmental education, the program creates lasting change and promotes community-driven sustainability. With proven success in Jaffna District—benefitting over 10,000 children—the program has now expanded to Puttalam, paving the way for national scalability.

Through innovative school nutrition gardens, students gain vital skills to grow organic produce, ensuring nutritious meals and fostering environmental stewardship. The students themselves tend and harvest fresh organic produce which they weigh, record, and hand over to the school kitchen, where it is cooked with rice and lentils to provide a nutritious meal on the school campus. Students inspire their families and neighbours to establish home gardens, fostering a culture of self-sufficiency. The program's participatory approach and emphasis on student leadership makes it a model for sustainable food security.



## Background:

The program was started in response to the 2021 economic crisis, during which soaring food prices led to malnutrition and hunger among school children. Inadequate government meal stipends left children vulnerable, prompting the launch of Education Without Hunger to combat hunger sustainably.

## Vision

To create a hunger-free, self-reliant Sri Lanka where every child has access to nutritious food, environmental education, and the tools to build a sustainable future.

## Objectives

- **Ensure children receive nutritious, balanced meals** by integrating organic school gardens into government meal programs.
- **Equip students with practical skills in food cultivation, climate-smart agriculture, and environmental sustainability**, fostering resilience against food insecurity and climate change.
- **Advance climate change mitigation by training students in sustainable practices** that reduce environmental impact, and build climate resilience.
- **Empower students as leaders and changemakers**, inspiring families and communities to adopt home gardens, embrace food security, and protect ecosystems.
- **Strengthen economic stability through sustainable food cultivation** by equipping students and communities with practical agricultural skills that enhance self-sufficiency, generate income, and reduce dependency on external food sources.
- **Transform schools into living classrooms of sustainability**, educating students to become climate-conscious leaders, catalysts of the grow your own food movement & innovators in green technologies.
- **Embed food security and sustainability education into national curricula and policy frameworks**, through government collaboration and structured implementation.







## Key Achievements in our journey towards achieving Sustainable food security

### 1. Augmenting government midday meals with fresh, organic produce grown in school nutrition gardens,

- SERENDIP BE THE CHANGE **FOUNDATION's Education Without Hunger** program ensures students receive healthy, balanced meals by integrating fresh, organic vegetables, herbs, and fruits into school meals.
- Since 2022, we have established Organic Nutrition Gardens in **16 schools across Jaffna impacting 9276 students**, and in 2025, expanded to **10 more schools in Puttalam impacting 6607 students**.
- Through Our education without Hunger programs, **700 Agriculture Club students in Jaffna District and 500 students in Puttalam district** participate in bi-monthly workshops on organic cultivation and sustainable agriculture—learning to grow, harvest, and manage organic produce firsthand.
- All harvested produce is carefully weighed, recorded, and handed over to the school kitchen, where it is cooked alongside rice and lentils provided through the Government's noon meal scheme—currently ensuring nutritious, **balanced meals for 1698 primary school students. Surplus harvests are sold** to purchase additional nutritious items **like milk and eggs, further enhancing students' overall diet.**





## 2. Children Leading the 'Grow Your Own Food' Movement

The *Education Without Hunger* program is driven by children. Far from being passive beneficiaries, they are the **planners, caretakers, changemakers, and leaders** of a powerful grassroots movement for sustainable food security.

- Students make key decisions about **what to grow, how to manage garden plots, and how to allocate resources**, working alongside teachers and the community.
- They lead efforts in **cultivation, composting, vermicomposting, seed saving, and organic pest control**—building real-world knowledge, self-confidence, and skills in sustainable agriculture.
- Their influence extends beyond school: students **share what they learn** with families and neighbours, inspiring them to start home gardens and adopt eco-friendly practices proving that **even the smallest hands can spark the largest of change**



### 3. Environmental Education & Climate Change Mitigation

Students are not only growing food—they are growing into **eco-conscious, climate-resilient leaders** who understand and act on the challenges facing their planet.

- Children are trained in **organic farming, composting, water conservation, waste management, and renewable energy concepts.**
- The program embeds **climate change mitigation** strategies through techniques like **mulching, cover cropping, and regenerative farming**, while encouraging daily eco-practices such as **reusing materials, saving water, and reducing plastic use.**
- Students take **environmental pledges**, lead **awareness campaigns**, and inspire their communities to adopt **greener, low-impact habits.**

These school gardens are not only feeding children—they are **growing the next generation of environmental stewards and climate champions.**



#### 4. Schools as Living Classrooms of Sustainability

Our school gardens have evolved into more than just food sources—they are living classrooms of sustainability, where students practice leadership, entrepreneurship, and environmental responsibility.

- **Students lead every aspect of garden management**—from garden mapping and seed selection to cultivation, composting, vermicomposting, seed saving, and organic pest control—building real-world knowledge, confidence, and skills in sustainable agriculture.
- **Garden responsibilities are divided among classes**, with specific zones assigned and rotating task calendars for watering, weeding, and care—fostering shared responsibility and teamwork.
- **Decisions are made collaboratively** with school staff and community members to ensure the gardens meet each school’s unique needs.
- After supplying the school kitchen with fresh organic produce, **students sell any surplus and manage the income through Agriculture Club savings accounts** overseen by a teacher.
- **Earnings are used to purchase milk and eggs**, further enriching student meals, while the **remainder is saved to support the garden’s upkeep and long-term sustainability**.
- These **student-run ecosystems teach financial literacy, cooperation, and long-term sustainability**, preparing children not just to grow food—but to grow futures.





## 5. Growing Resilience: Students Leading the Way in Home Gardens & Household Food Security

The impact of the *Education Without Hunger* program goes far beyond school boundaries. **At the heart of this transformation have been the children themselves.** They have gained **practical skills** in cultivation, composting, vermicomposting, seed saving, and organic pest control, and have actively shared their knowledge with parents and neighbours—**inspiring entire families to start home gardens and embrace food security**

- **Student changemakers** are inspiring families and communities to adopt **home gardens** and sustainable farming practices.
- Communities are cultivating **zero-waste home gardens**, growing nutritious organic produce, **reducing food expenses, selling surplus,** and **improving household income and nutrition.**





## 6. Community Engagement

- Active participation **by parents, teachers, and local leaders** fosters a strong sense of pride, shared responsibility, and collective ownership of the program.
- This participatory, **community-led approach** ensures that each school garden is relevant to the local context and **sustainable** in the long term.
- **Parents and community volunteers** regularly support garden maintenance—helping children with **watering, weeding, and land preparation, and contributing manual labor** for tasks like building fences and compost pits.
- **Families donate soil, seeds, and saplings, reinforcing a culture of shared contribution.**
- We procure seeds, tools, and equipment from **local vendors**, strengthening **rural livelihoods** and the **local green economy**.
- This collaborative model ensures each garden is tailored to the school's needs and cultural context, while deepening **community ownership**.





## 7. Government Partnership and Recognition

Collaborations with government entities play a pivotal role in ensuring the long-term success and scalability of the program:

- **Technical Expertise:** The program is strengthened by close collaboration with the **Departments of Education and Agriculture in the Northern and North Western Provinces**. Government-appointed agricultural instructors and education officers regularly guide students and teachers, monitor garden progress, and ensure alignment with best practices in school-based agriculture.
- **Government-Led Evaluations:** Periodic evaluations conducted by government bodies validate the program's impact, establish accountability, and reinforce best practices. To ensure **accountability and measurable progress**, each beneficiary school in the program undergoes Periodic Education **Department-led external evaluations** assessing their **agricultural productivity, sustainability practices, and impact on student nutrition**.
- **Certification:** At the end of each cycle, students receive official certificates—jointly issued by the **Agriculture Department, Education Department, and SBTCF**—acknowledging their practical skills in sustainable agriculture and supporting their future educational and career opportunities.
- **Legitimacy and Scaling:** These collaborations lend institutional legitimacy to the program, encouraging its adoption in other districts **across Sri Lanka**



# Key Outcomes of Our School home and community Organic Nutrition Gardens

## 1. Nutritional Impact

- Students are enjoying their noon meals more, thanks to the fresh, organically grown vegetables, fruits, and herbs from their own school gardens—with many even returning for second helpings.
- A well-balanced diet includes carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals—essential for children's growth, immunity, energy, and classroom focus. **Through the *Education Without Hunger* program, students now receive nutritious, well-balanced meals each day consisting of;**
  - **Carbohydrates** (like rice) provided through the **government school meal scheme**.
  - **Our school gardens supplement these meals with:**
    - Fresh vegetables rich in **fibre and vitamins**
    - Fruits packed with **antioxidants**
    - **Protein-rich pulses, legumes, and leafy greens**
    - Medicinal herbs and roots that **support immunity and digestion**
  - Students garden produce and use the income to purchase **milk and eggs**, further improving protein intake.

August			
Date	Name	Details	R.S.
15/08	புதுமலை அகிலா	800g காய்கறி	120.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	400g காய்கறி	70.00
27/08	புதுமலை அகிலா	400g காய்கறி	70.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	400g காய்கறி	70.00
August	Longitudinal	Overall	190.00

  

October			
Date	Name	Details	R.S.
05/10	புதுமலை அகிலா	1300g காய்கறி	300.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	400g காய்கறி	150.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	50g காய்கறி	50.00
18/10	புதுமலை அகிலா	1950g காய்கறி	310.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	500g காய்கறி	150.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	650g காய்கறி	260.00
29/10	புதுமலை அகிலா	400g காய்கறி	145.00
	புதுமலை அகிலா	400g காய்கறி	1365.00
October	Longitudinal	Overall	





## **2.Cognitive & Health Impact: Growing Resilient Learners**

Our school gardens are not just growing food—they're cultivating healthier, more focused, and resilient learners.

- Improved diet diversity has led to noticeable gains in student health, energy, and classroom alertness
- Fewer hunger-related incidents are being reported, including a significant reduction in fainting episodes during school hours

The link between nutrition and learning is clear: when children are well-fed, they are better able to think, engage, and thrive.

## **3. Reduction in School Dropouts**

- With the daily availability of nutritious, enjoyable meals, schools have seen a rise in student attendance and retention, especially among vulnerable children.
- The consistent midday meal improves both physical well-being and motivation to attend school—helping reduce dropouts linked to hunger and malnutrition.



# Key Outcomes of Our Environmental Education and Sustainable Agriculture Training

## 1. Plastic Reduction & Upcycling

- Students actively avoid single-use plastics and creatively repurpose waste into planters, garden tools, and signage—nurturing a circular economy mindset from a young age.
- They also creatively repurpose waste materials into planters and gardening tools.

## 2. Waste Segregation, Composting & Soil Health

- Schools have established effective waste segregation systems. Students sort waste into bins and lead efforts to turn kitchen and garden waste into compost, mulch, and vermicompost.
- Children are also trained to create natural pesticides and soil enhancers using available materials, significantly reducing chemical dependency and promoting cost-effective sustainability.





### 3.Environmental Leadership & Climate Advocacy

- Students take environmental pledges and lead regular awareness campaigns within and beyond their schools, advocating for climate action and sustainable living.
- Daily eco-habits—like conserving water and electricity and caring for animals—are embedded through hands-on learning, reinforcing lifelong **environmental responsibility**.

### 4. Seed Saving & Biodiversity Conservation

- Every school now runs a student-managed seed bank, where children practice seed saving, sorting, and storing to ensure crop diversity and year-round garden productivity.
- Students also participate in tree planting drives to combat deforestation and receive training in regenerative farming and soil conservation techniques to protect long-term land health.

These outcomes reflect the success of our environmental education and sustainable agriculture training in shaping eco-literate, climate-conscious students who are leading change in their schools, homes, and communities.



# **Transformative Outcomes: Cultivating Food Security, Economic Resilience, Dignity, and Unity Through Education Without Hunger**

## **1. Uniting Sri Lankan Children Across Ethnicities and Religions for Education Without Hunger**

The children of Jaffna, empowered through *Education Without Hunger*, have become inspiring leaders—expressing a strong desire to extend the program to other vulnerable communities, regardless of ethnicity or religion. These young changemakers pledged to mentor peers in underserved regions, sharing their knowledge and helping others grow with dignity.

The program's expansion to **Puttalam/Kalpitiya** brings this vision to life. Here, **Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu** children are coming together to cultivate food security and self-reliance. Funded by local donors through the *Be the Change* campaign and supported by events like *Dine for a Cause*, the initiative shows how unity and community-driven action can nourish both children and hope.

Since January, SBTCF's local team has worked closely with schools using a **participatory approach**—allowing children to choose what to grow, where to plant, and how to care for their gardens. On **April 23rd**, garden starter kits were distributed at Mampuriya Roman Catholic Sinhala & Tamil Maha Vidyalayam, officially launching the program. Once fully developed, this chapter will reach over **6,000 children**—strengthening food security while fostering inclusion and pride across diverse communities.





## 2. A Food Security Movement Rooted in Community Ownership

The Education Without Hunger program has grown beyond the classroom into a community-led movement for food security and sustainability, empowering students, teachers, and families to build resilient food systems at the grassroots level.

This transformation is driven by three key pillars:

- **Climate-smart farming** to protect communities from climate-induced food insecurity.
- **Waste-to-wealth innovation**, promoting composting, organic farming, and zero-waste principles.
- **Agri-based livelihoods**, encouraging entrepreneurship and future employment in green sectors.

By embedding self-sufficiency, circular economy practices, and shared responsibility, the initiative aligns with Sri Lanka's National Food Security Strategy and climate adaptation goals—making food security a community-owned, scalable solution rather than a top-down intervention.



### 3. Economic Resilience at the Grassroots

The Education Without Hunger program is designed not just to combat malnutrition, but to catalyze lasting economic resilience through school, home, and community-led food production. As the program scales, it is already laying the foundation for transformative, long-term economic outcomes:

- **Food Security & Reduced Dependency:** When families grow their own food, they reduce reliance on costly imports and market volatility—stabilizing household expenses and reinforcing local food systems.
- **Income Generation:** Surplus harvests from school and home gardens are already being sold, generating revenue for families and school Agriculture Clubs—promoting self-sufficiency and local micro-enterprise.
- **Job Creation & Skill Development:** Students trained in sustainable farming, renewable energy, and waste-to-wealth practices are gaining skills aligned with careers in Sri Lanka's climate-smart economy. Government-endorsed certifications issued by Serendip be The Change Foundation to the students further strengthen their future opportunities.
- **Lower Costs & Long-Term Sustainability:** Organic cultivation reduces input costs by minimizing the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides, while improving soil health, productivity, and biodiversity—making agriculture both affordable and regenerative.
- **Climate Resilience & Economic Stability:** The students of today are learning to become the food growers of tomorrow. Climate-smart techniques—like mulching, rainwater harvesting, and drought-tolerant planting—build resilience to erratic weather, protecting livelihoods from crop failure and contributing to long-term food and economic security.





## Strategies for Sustainable Impact:

At Serendip Be The Change Foundation, sustainability is more than a goal—it's a foundational principle. The *Education Without Hunger* (EWH) program isn't just about planting school gardens; it is about building self-reliance, fostering climate leadership, and securing food sovereignty for Sri Lanka's most vulnerable communities. Below is an integrated outline of our sustainability strategy, achievements to date, and vision for the future.

### 1. Education for Sustainable Development

Our strategy begins with in-depth, ongoing training that equips students, teachers, and communities with lifelong knowledge in sustainable agriculture and environmental practices.

Syllabus Areas Already Covered:

- **Organic Farming:** Chemical-free cultivation, soil health, and natural pest control.
- **Composting & Vermicomposting:** Transforming food and garden waste into nutrient-rich inputs.
- **Waste Management:** Segregation, recycling, and waste-to-wealth practices.
- **Seed Saving & Biodiversity:** Preservation of heirloom/native seeds and crop diversity.



- **Key Areas of Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education**  
**Syllabus To be completed in the next three years:** Pls note: We are also actively working to secure a partnership with an international university's Environmental education /Sustainability Department, as well as with government institutions, to bring world-class expertise and resources to strengthen and scale these efforts.
  - **Biodiversity Conservation** – Understanding ecosystems, conserving native plant and animal species, and promoting pollinator-friendly habitats.
  - **Kindness to Animals & Humane Farming Practices** – Encouraging ethical animal husbandry, promoting humane treatment of farm animals, and educating about wildlife protection.
  - **Climate Change Mitigation Techniques** – Implementing methods such as mulching, cover cropping, rainwater harvesting, and soil restoration to combat drought and extreme weather conditions.
  - **Global Warming & Climate Change Solutions** – Teaching practical strategies for reducing carbon emissions, improving energy efficiency, and advocating for sustainable lifestyles.
  - **Environmental Conservation** – Engaging in tree planting, learning about erosion control strategies, and protection of local water sources and ecosystems.
  - **Green Futures Initiative** – Equipping students with climate leadership skills, fostering discussions on Sri Lanka's carbon footprint, and exploring renewable energy solutions to create a sustainable future.
  - **Regenerative Agriculture** – Educating the schools and communities on Restoring soil health through natural methods, including cover cropping, crop rotation, agroforestry, and minimal tillage practices.
- Biodiversity & Ecosystem Conservation**





## 2. Achieving Self-Reliance: Our 5-Year Exit Strategy

We envision every participating school becoming self-sufficient within five years. Our phased sustainability model includes:

### Sustainability related Progress Achieved so far:

- **Income Generation:** Several schools (e.g., American Mission School – Panaakam, Kayts St. Mary’s RC, Jaffna Hindu Ladies’ College) are already selling surplus produce to buy milk, eggs, or reinvest in seeds, tools, and garden expansion—laying the groundwork for long-term food self-reliance.
- **Savings Accounts Established:** Dedicated **Agriculture Club savings accounts** have been opened for every participating school, where income from garden sales is securely saved to fund future garden needs and ensure program sustainability.
- **Student Leadership:** Children manage composting, seed saving, and pest control, and mentor peers and parents.
- **Community Involvement:** Parents and teachers contribute time, labor, and even seeds or tools.
- **Ripple Effect: Home gardens** emerging across school communities; children driving change beyond schools.



### Next Steps for Long-Term Sustainability:

- **Organic produce, Compost & Bio-input Sales:** Looking ahead, our goal is to scale up production so that, after meeting the school's own needs and purchasing extra items, there is still significant surplus to sell. We also plan to expand compost, fertilizer, and organic pesticide production so schools can begin selling these as well. **Over time, this will build a sustainable pot of savings, and the interest earned can fully fund garden upkeep—ensuring the gardens thrive independently long after our formal exit.**
- **Renewable Energy Vision:** If government approval and corporate partnerships are secured, solar panels installed in schools could feed surplus energy into the grid, creating an additional revenue stream to support school gardens and sustainability initiatives..
- **E-learning and peer training:** As part of our future plans, we aim to develop e-learning modules for all training topics. If we can raise the necessary funds, these modules will allow schools to access training digitally, reducing the need for our trainers to visit in person. Senior students will be equipped to train juniors before graduating, creating a rolling, peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing model that strengthens sustainability and ensures that knowledge is continuously passed down within the school.





### **3. Advancing Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Education Without Hunger program offers an integrated approach to food security, climate resilience, and youth empowerment supporting 13 of the 17 UN SDGs. Its cross-cutting design supports education, environment, economy, and equity in vulnerable communities. The program aligns with the following SDGs:

- **SDG 1 – No Poverty:** By reducing household food expenses and enabling income generation through surplus produce, the program supports economic relief for low-income families.
- **SDG 2 – Zero Hunger:** School gardens provide daily, nutritious meals, directly reducing child malnutrition and food insecurity.
- **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being:** Improved nutrition enhances student health, learning capacity, and well-being.
- **SDG 4 – Quality Education:** Hands-on learning in food cultivation, sustainability, and climate action is embedded into school life.
- **SDG 5 – Gender Equality:** Both girls and boys take leadership roles in garden initiatives, promoting equality and agency.
- **SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation:** Water conservation and greywater reuse are practiced in school gardens and taught to students.
- **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy:** The initiative explores solar-powered solutions for water pumping and sustainability education.
- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Training in sustainable agriculture and green entrepreneurship builds a future-ready workforce.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Strengthens local food systems and enhances community resilience through home gardens.
- **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production:** Composting, waste segregation, and zero-waste farming instill a culture of circular resource use.
- **SDG 13 – Climate Action:** Students learn climate-smart practices that enhance mitigation, adaptation, and long-term resilience.
- **SDG 15 – Life on Land:** Supports biodiversity and ecosystem regeneration through organic, regenerative farming and tree planting.

#### 4. Vision for National Expansion & Curriculum Integration

SERENDIP BE THE CHANGE FOUNDATION envisions taking the Education Without Hunger program to the national level, ensuring no Sri Lankan child goes hungry.

- **Future expansions** aim to extend beyond schools and into universities, creating a network of student-led solutions to address malnutrition and food insecurity.
- By **bringing together government patronage and corporate sponsorship**, the program seeks to reach vulnerable schools and communities across the country, wherever hunger and malnutrition persist.
- Moreover, plans include incorporating Education for **Sustainable Development** into the **national curriculum**.
- By teaching students about **sustainable agriculture** and **environmental stewardship**, the program will foster a generation of eco-conscious citizens equipped to tackle **climate change mitigation**.

This initiative not only ensures **food security** but also contributes to **protecting the planet**, paving the way for a greener and more sustainable future for **Sri Lanka's next generation**





## Conclusion

The Education Without Hunger program is a proven model for sustainable change, integrating food security, environmental education, and community ownership. With students leading the way, families embracing sustainability, and government partnerships ensuring scalability, this initiative is creating a national movement to eradicate hunger and equip **Sri Lankan children with the tools for resilience and self-sufficiency.**

With its proven success, the Education Without Hunger program holds immense potential to inspire a nationwide dialogue on integrating nutrition gardens into school curriculums. By scaling this initiative, Sri Lanka can take a bold step toward achieving food security for all children while cultivating a generation of eco-conscious leaders dedicated to **building a sustainable future.**





## BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD



Dine for a Cause fundraising dinner Held in Chennai 2024



Dine for a Cause fundraising dinner Held in Colombo 2024







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