While Rwanda has made dramatic progress in decreasing child mortality, chronic malnutrition remains high among children under the age of five. This hurts not only the economy also the welfare of the young. But some people are standing up against this odd and are taking on the fight against malnutrition.

One such gallant person is 41 year-old Verdiane Mushimiyimana who lives in a rural district about two hours outside of Kigali, the capital.

As a mother of five children, it was always hard providing good and nutritious meals to feed her family. Having seen four of her children grow without enough nutritious foods, Verdiane was determined to provide enough for her fifth born, Aimable. Now as a bouncing one-year old baby boy, Aimable has benefitted from six-month exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding that every baby deserves.

All these were valuable lessons Verdiane learned from her community nutrition group – which is one of 436 nutrition groups established in eight of Rwanda’s 30 districts by USAID’s Ejo Heza (“Brighter Future”) Program which works to improve livelihoods and food consumption of 75,000 Rwandans, particularly women.

“My last child Aimable was born when I was in the USAID Ejo Heza nutrition group; he received proper nutrition and proper health care due to the education I received.”

The lessons from the nutrition group were also extended to her wider family as all members enjoy a better welfare. “In the last two years with the USAID Ejo Heza nutrition group, I have not had any disease cases in my family” said Verdiane.

Through the program’s integrated approach, beneficiaries like Verdiane are also empowered with agriculture messages that promote kitchen gardening and improved food handling.

USAID’s Ejo Heza program is a five year, $13 million program implemented by Global Communities, which aims to improve rural nutrition and livelihoods by increasing the supply of and demand for financial services, improving nutrition behaviours and agriculture practices.

 ,