

Mozambique School Lunch Initiative

July 2018 – Newsletter



2-year anniversary for the Mozambique School Lunch Initiative!
Updates from the field



2-year anniversary for MSLI!

May 23, 2018 marked the 2-year anniversary of MSLI providing school meals to students in rural schools in Mozambique. Over the past two years, we have grown from serving daily school lunches to 500 students to over **1,050 students**. We are happy that our organization has been a consistent source of nutrition for these students, keeping them in school and learning more.

In the process, we've also been able to stimulate agricultural development in the local communities where we are working, increasing production, farmer income, and food security for Mozambican families.

We have served over **383,000 school meals** to date and don't plan on stopping anytime soon!

School Lunches

This year we have continued providing school lunches in five rural primary schools in Chokwe District of Mozambique. In our newest school, Bombôfo Primary School, which joined our program in August 2017, the start of the new school year in January 2018 saw a huge spike in enrollment. The number of students enrolled in grades 1-7 increased from 274 students to 418 students (a 52 percent jump!), of which we can attribute at least partially to the incentive of the school lunch program. Teachers report that this has been especially significant for younger students, with parents sending them to school earlier rather than holding them back at home. When a child starts school at age 6 instead of age 8 or 9, this makes a big difference for the child's learning, especially when the language of instruction is not their native language (as is the case with Portuguese and local languages in Mozambique).



Students enjoying school lunch at Bombôfo Primary School.

Local Agricultural Development

This year we have stepped up our engagement with local farmer groups to increase their production and include them into our supply chain for the school lunches.

In March 2018, we launched the third season of investment in four farmer groups around the schools where we work. Our team of local agronomists are collaborated with the farmer groups to select the crops that best fit the local environment, the interests of the farmers, and the procurement needs of the school lunch program. We also responded to farmers demands for tractor services and irrigation equipment, which has allowed them to expand their fields to a much larger size and increase their yield.



Tractors hired from Chokwe town plowed 7.5 acres for the farmer groups (left); allowing them to utilize small-scale irrigation equipment and increase their production (right).

This season, farmers grew beans, kale, cabbage, tomatoes, onions, and lettuce. By June farmers were already starting to harvest vegetables like kale, fulfilling all the procurement needs of the school lunch program for that crop. For some farmers, yields were so good that they had additional surplus to sell to neighboring villages as well. This was another positive impact of the program, as it is increasing the availability of fresh, nutritious vegetables for the community.



Farmers tending their bean crops (left); harvesting cabbages (center); and selling tomatoes to the school lunch program (right).

What's Next

We are very excited to keep developing new ways to increase our impact on child nutrition and food security in Mozambique. Some of our plans for the coming months include:

- Increasing monitoring capacity by the local cooks
- Savings projects with the farmer groups to cover the costs of agricultural inputs
- Increased cost-effectiveness through lower procurement costs by sourcing more locally

At each step of the way, we emphasize community engagement and partnership to ensure that our efforts will be sustained and meet real needs. There are many more schools in Mozambique in need of school meals programs, and we hope that our program will develop a model that can expand to reach students across Mozambique.



Thank you to everyone who has supported our work in Mozambique. Stay tuned for continued updates from the field!

About Us

The Mozambique School Lunch Initiative (MSLI) is a non-profit organization that improves child nutrition by developing high-quality, “home-grown” school lunch programs and transforming agricultural production in local communities. In Mozambique, 80 percent of the population cannot afford an adequate diet and almost half of children are considered to be chronically malnourished. Our integrated approach tackles child nutrition from a short and long-term perspective: through targeted assistance in schools as well as incentivizing more productive agricultural systems.



Farmers working to transplant vegetable crops (left); a sack of freshly harvested beans (right).