



Mozambique School Lunch INITIATIVE

August 2019 – Newsletter



Overview of 2019 so far:

- ❖ Celebrating MSLI's 3rd year anniversary – over **500,000 meals!!**
- ❖ Growth at the grassroots – increasing local procurement with our farmer groups
- ❖ Nutritional survey – targeting meals to fill the gaps
- ❖ What's next – prioritizing nutrition through the School Lunch and Seed Support programs



Figure 1: The MSLI team (Cara, Roberto, Talvina, Mr. Mutisse and Jaime) with the cooks (Sara and Teçina) at Candiza School.

1,037 school meals a day!

This school year, we have a total of 982 students registered across five schools, with an additional average of 55 children who are pre-school age who show up to school to eat lunch alongside their school-age brothers and sisters. MSLI never turns a student away, no matter their age. We are committed to improving child nutrition and empowering students to get the education they deserve!



MSLI's 3-Year Anniversary – Over Half a Million Meals

May 23rd, 2019 was MSLI 3-year anniversary, marking three full years that we have been serving school meals in primary schools in rural Chokwe District, Mozambique.

Over **535,000** meals served to date!



Figure 2: Sara and Teçina, the cooks at Candiza School, serving xima and chicken for lunch.

Not a Single School Day Missed

Since we began three years ago, students have been able to count on our school meals every day. Being able to deliver that consistently is a feat in rural Mozambique and demonstrates the dedication of everyone involved.

⇒ **Reliable food deliveries, in all conditions.** In February, heavy flooding required the team to carry food across rivers on their shoulders. Many community members also pitched in to help.



Figure 3: A scene from February when heavy rains made parts of the roads impassable. But MSL's school lunch program didn't miss a day.

⇒ **Reliable cooks - steadfast on the frontlines.**



Figure 4: The cooks at Bombôfo School, Calma (left) and Ernestina (right).

MSLI's cooks are essential to making sure school meals are cooked and served every day. Their dedication to their jobs makes a huge difference. If one gets sick, she calls a family member to take her place that day. When one of our cooks at Cumba School, Spiwa, gave birth to a baby, Talvina trained a substitute cook to take her place during her three-month maternity leave.



Figure 5: Spiwa (right), one of the cooks from Cumba School, gave birth to a baby girl (held by Talvina, left) in April.

Building Resilience at the Grassroots

We believe that one of the key long-term strategies to improving child nutrition in rural areas of Mozambique is to invest in the smallholder farmers in the community – and our school lunch program can be leveraged to do just that. This is something that makes our model special. In a diagram, this is how MSLI's program works:

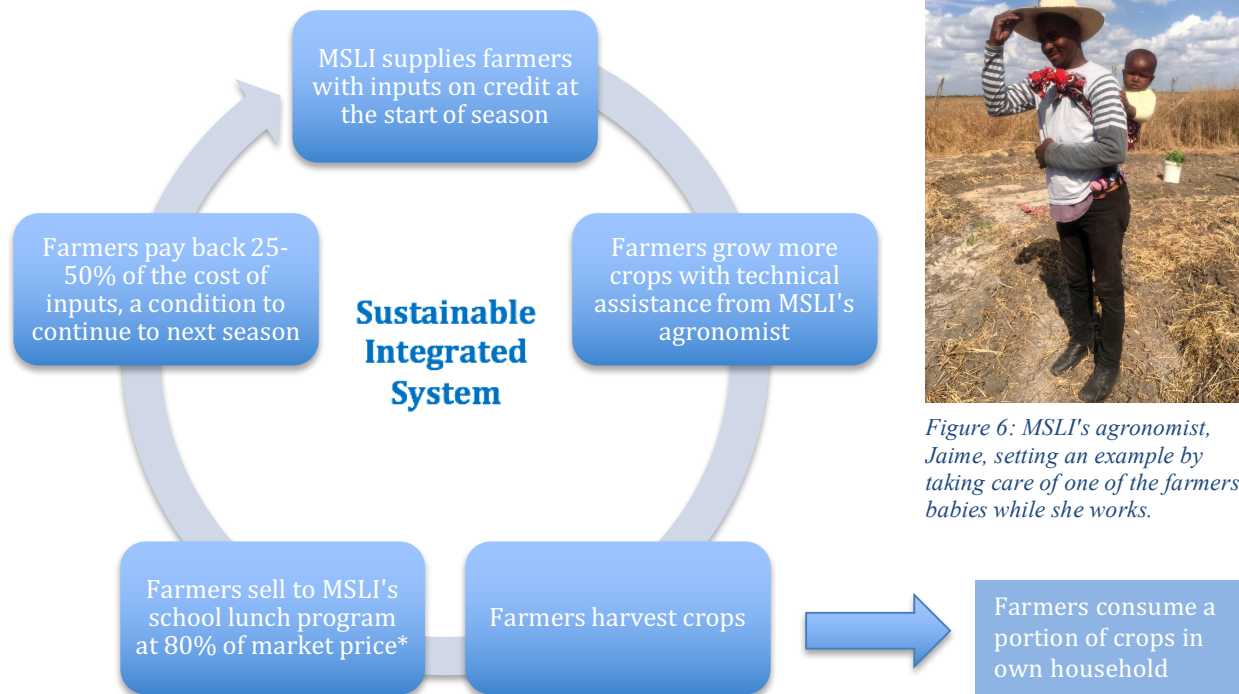


Figure 6: MSLI's agronomist, Jaime, setting an example by taking care of one of the farmers' babies while she works.

****Improved nutrition at school****

****Improved nutrition in the community****

*Note: 80% of the market price is the price MSLI would have to pay for food from the nearest market. For example, if a kilo of beans costs 100 meticaís (Mozambican currency) in the Chokwe market, MSLI will pay 80 meticaís per kilo to the local farmers in the Seed Support program. However, the farmers still feel like they are getting a fair price because they would have to pay transport costs and middlemen costs to market their production in Chokwe and would end up with far less profit than they earn with MSLI. That's why this strategy is a positive-sum model of change.

February's Harvest

In February, MSLI purchased cowpeas and onions from farmers in the local village, supplying the school lunch program for almost two months. For these farmers, working with MSLI has enabled them to grow more food for their families and have a surplus to sell and earn income.

Figure 7: Farmers from Candiza village with part of their production of cowpeas and onions in February. This farmer group is comprised of almost all women members, and they are consistently one of our highest-producing groups.





Main season (April – September)

During the cooler season this year, MSLI's farmer groups ramped up production significantly, planting beans, tomatoes, kale, onions, and two new crops: beets and orange sweet potatoes! We have already started harvesting kale and will soon be harvesting tomatoes, beans, and beets. By September the onions and orange sweet potatoes will also be ready. We are very excited by the amount of progress the farmers have made and the level of autonomy at which they are now working.



Figure 8: Program Manager, Roberto, helping out with irrigation in the beginning of the season.



Figure 9: Farmers in Cumba village harvesting kale to sell to MSLI's school lunch program.

Farmer Profile: Joana from Candiza



Joana is a hard-working farmer from Candiza village and the mother of four daughters. Joana and her husband, Paulo, make their living off of subsistence farming and selling charcoal. However, before working with MSLI, Joana had never used improved seeds or fertilizer and depended on the rain instead of using irrigation equipment. With MSLI's support, she is producing more and is very excited to sell to MSLI's school lunch program, generating more income for her family. While both Joana and Paulo never went to school, they are determined that all of their daughters will study as long as they can. Up until seventh grade, the daughters benefit from MSLI's school lunches at the nearby school. However, there is no high school in the village and the nearest one is over an hour's drive away. Once their eldest daughter, Carolina graduated from seventh grade, her parents were so determined that she would continue studying that they asked Talvina, MSLI's program supervisor, if Carolina could live with her in Chokwe so she could enroll in high school there. Talvina accepted immediately and has supported Carolina like one of her own daughters. This family is an inspiration.



Description of Nutritional Survey

The MSLI team carried out a nutritional survey between April-July 2019 with 122 students distributed across 5 primary schools in the villages of Chokwe District, Mozambique. The students were stratified by gender and grade and then selected randomly. Our team administered a 2-page survey to each student separately, asking them questions about what they eat at home on a regular basis. The goal was to better understand the nutritional baseline for students served by MSLI, and figure out how our program can better target nutritional needs.



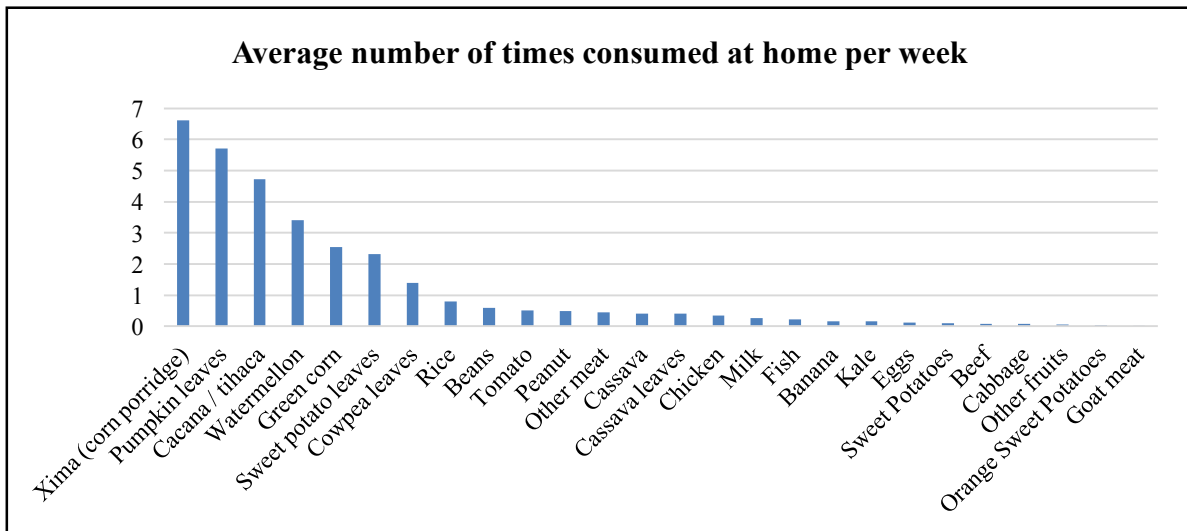
Figure 10: MSLI Program Supervisor, Talvina, administers the nutritional survey to a student at Bombôfo School.

Findings

1) Low-protein diets - Most students' diets are heavily dependent on xima (boiled corn porridge) and a variety of green leaves that are traditionally stewed. Foods high in protein are particularly lacking, with students consuming protein-rich foods only twice a week (average 2.1 times). We found protein-rich foods particularly missing from the diets of younger students and students from more remote villages.

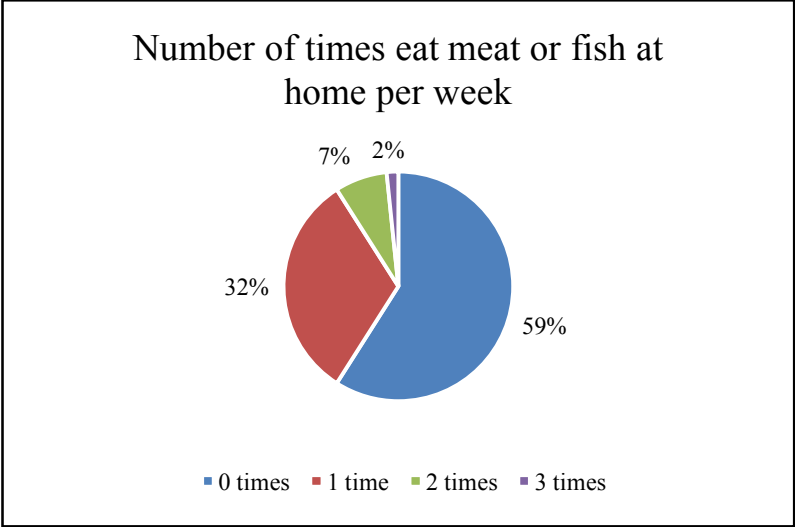


Figure 11: The most common food consumed is a corn porridge called xima (the white mixture in the upper-right pot) served with a side of stewed leaves (like the pumpkin leaves in the lower-left pot).





59% of students reported that they eat meat or fish zero times per week at home.



2) Low diet diversity - In general, the diet diversity is very low, with students consuming on average 8.57 different foods per week (of the 26 most common foods listed in the survey), missing out on key nutrients from a diversified diet.

3) MSLI's school lunch menu targets key nutrient gaps - For the main foods used in MSLI's weekly school lunch menu, we found that the school lunches significantly increase students' consumption of protein rich foods and diversity of foods.

4) Going to school on an empty belly - We found that 62% of students do not eat anything in the morning. For these students, the draw of a big school lunch is a strong incentive to go to school. It also demonstrates the critical need the school lunch program is filling for children who would otherwise be going hungry most of the day.

Number of times consumed per week		
Food	At home (average)	At school lunch
Xima (corn)*	6.61	3
Rice	0.79	2
Chicken	0.35	1
Beans	0.59	3
Kale	0.15	1
Peanuts	0.48	1

*As the main staple, most children typically consume xima twice a day. Therefore, for this food, the number of times consumed is really number of days. For the other foods, it is number of times.

Student Profile

Verônica Jeremias Maiva is 8 years old, in grade 3 at Punguine Primary School. She has two brothers. She has been eating lunch at school ever since she was in first grade. When asked in the survey what she ate the day before, this is what she told us:

- Morning** - Nothing
- Afternoon** - Rice and bean stew with vegetables (school lunch)
- Evening** - Xima with stewed sweet potato leaves



Figure 13: Verônica is in third grade at Punguine School.

What's next

Based on the findings from this survey, MSLI is setting three priorities for the nutrition served in our school meals:

1. **Emphasize protein-rich foods.** MSLI will continue ensuring that the school lunches provide at least 50% of a student's weekly protein requirements.
2. **Support farmers to grow a more diverse set of crops that can be consumed at home and used in the school lunch program.** This season, MSLI supported farmers to grow beets and orange sweet potatoes, in addition to the usual crops of beans, kale, tomatoes and onions. These two crops grow well in the local conditions and are highly nutritious!



Figure 14: Orange sweet potatoes.



Figure 15: Beets are almost ready!



Figure 16: Beet rows in Duvane farm.

3. **Sensitize the community on the importance of nutrition and diet diversity.** By the end of 2019, we aim to hold “nutrition days” in each of the villages where MSLI is present. With the support of the District Health Services, these “nutrition days” will provide nutritional information that local families can utilize in their homes.

What you can do to support MSLI:

1) **Donate** – You can support a whole year of school lunches for a child at just \$50. MSLI is a 501(c)3 organization, which means that all donations are tax-exempt. [Donate to MSLI via PayPal](#)

2) **Support MSLI** – You can support MSLI by holding a Facebook Fundraiser for Mozambique School Lunch Initiative or using Amazon Smile (0.5% of your purchase goes to MSLI!) Just shop at: <https://smile.amazon.com/> and select “Mozambique School Lunch Initiative” to support.

3) **Connect us** – If you know someone who would be interested in MSLI, introduce us!

4) **Volunteer your skills** – If you're good at something that could be helpful for MSLI, let us know! For example, we have volunteers who do our taxes pro bono and manage our website.

To connect, learn more, or offer your skills, just send an email to Cara Myers: cara.ann.myers@gmail.com

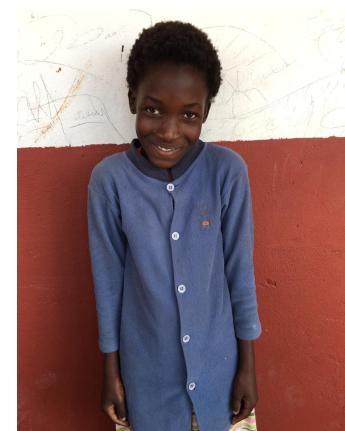


Figure 17: Crisalda, an 11-year old student in 5th grade at Punguine School.