



# Mozambique School Lunch INITIATIVE

January 2020 – Newsletter



*Figure 1: A student at Cumba Primary School smiling about her school lunch of rice, beans, orange sweet potatoes and beets!*

## Highlights from 2019:

- ❖ Higher nutrition with new additions to the menu
- ❖ Measured impacts on education: higher attendance → greater learning → higher pass rates
- ❖ Local procurement made a breakthrough: local farmers become MSLI's key food suppliers and more than double their household income.
- ❖ Snapshots from the field
- ❖ Plans for 2020 – **we're expanding to a 6<sup>th</sup> school!**

**Over 200,000 meals  
served in 2019!**

## Platinum Seal of Transparency on Guidestar

In 2019, the Mozambique School Lunch Initiative earned the Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar, a non-profit monitoring organization. This is the highest designation that GuideStar awards. It is given to non-profits for publicly disclosing finances, operational goals, and results. GuideStar's rating system is consistently used within the philanthropic world as an indicator of credibility. We are honored to be evaluated so highly!



**MSLI featured in a blog post on [Harvard University's Building State Capability](#) website**

Want to learn more about our journey and our model? Check out this post from September 2019: <https://buildingstatecapability.com/2019/09/23/pdia-journey-the-mozambique-school-lunch-initiative/>

## **Boosting nutrition – beets and orange sweet potatoes added to the school lunch menu**

In 2019, we introduced two new foods to the school lunch menu: **beets** and **orange sweet potatoes**. These two foods provide much-needed vitamins and micronutrients. They are also delicious and were a major hit among the students! At MSLI, we want to make sure that students look forward to lunch every day, which is why we prioritize hearty meals that taste good. What's more, 100% of the beets and orange sweet potatoes were grown by local farmers – strengthening our emphasis on buying local.



*Figure 2: Students at Punguine Primary School with their school lunch of rice, beans, sweet potatoes and beets!*



*Figure 3: Beets sure add a splash of color (and nutrition) to a big plate of beans and xima!*

### **How did we choose beets and orange sweet potatoes?**

True to our experimental approach to innovation, both beets and orange sweet potatoes were introduced as new trial crops based on experiences in the field. At the end of the year in 2018, the MSLI team was walking through a community farm when we saw a farmer pull up one of the biggest beets the team had ever seen. This seemed like evidence that beets could grow well in the local soil so we decided to launch a trial season, supporting more farmers in growing beets. Similarly, often when we have a long field day, somebody will boil a big pot of white sweet potatoes and pass them around to snack on. Orange sweet potatoes are less common, but they are chock-full of beta-carotene, giving the orange color and over 500% of a person's daily requirement of Vitamin A in just a single 200-gram serving. Recent initiatives have tried to encourage farmers to grow the orange variety, but many farmers have difficulty accessing the starter roots. In fact, the MSLI team had to travel to another district several hours away to get them from the Agricultural Research Station. This is one example of how we can serve as a facilitator to help solve both the supply and demand challenges of increasing access to nutritious food in Chokwe district. Our trial run with beets and orange sweet potatoes was a great success and we look forward to expanding production in 2020!



*Figure 4: A farmer in Candiza shows off the massive beets she just harvested and plans to sell to MSLI's school lunch program.*

## Education impacts: Data shows higher pass rates after school lunch program began

In Mozambique, the government tracks education statistics for every primary school. Using this data from Gaza Province (where we are based), we took a closer look at the impacts of the school lunch program on educational performance. While we cannot attribute all changes to the effect of the school lunch program (or prove causality), we saw some interesting and positive correlations that corroborate the anecdotal evidence we see at the schools every day.

Higher attendance → greater learning → higher pass rates

Since our school lunch program began in 2016, teachers have reported significant improvements in students' daily school attendance. This allows the teachers to teach more and students to learn more in the classroom. Now, we can see a marked increase in the percentage of students who pass their year-end final exams, which determine if they will pass to the next grade or not. Prior to the school lunch program, around 80 percent of students passed their final exams. Two years after the school lunch program started, that number has risen to over 94 percent, on average. We compared the pass rate in schools served by MSLI to four nearby primary schools that do not have a school lunch program and observed no improvement in the pass rates at these schools over the last three years. We are planning to expand to these schools next, sufficient funding is the only thing holding us back!

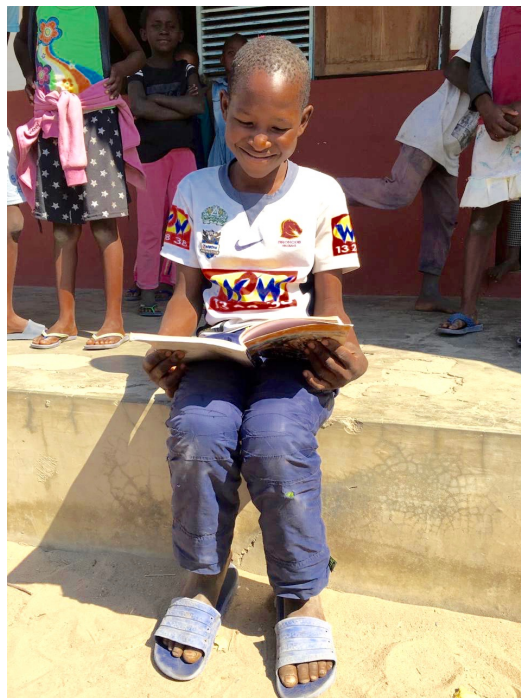


Figure 5: School lunches help students focus on their studies and learn more at school.

### Fifth grade pass rates, by year

Year	MSLI Schools				Non-MSLI Schools			
	Duvane	Punguine	Cumba	Bombofo	Duavaio	Tlawene	Changulene	Djodjo
2018	96%	97%	89%	63%	68%	77%	69%	64%
2017	82%	86%	100%	50%	79%	67%	73%	59%
2016	81%	85%	78%	59%	88%	78%	75%	59%
2015	76%	90%	100%	56%	100%	56%	74%	80%
2014	74%	75%	78%	62%	85%	82%	75%	91%

Yellow = indicates the year in which MSLI started the school lunch program in the school

\*Note: MSLI operates a school lunch program in a 5<sup>th</sup> school (Candiza), not included in this table because the school only goes to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Our school lunch program seems to have a stronger effect on pass rates after two years, which suggests that having better nutrition and regular attendance for a longer period of time is having a greater impact on learning. **Students who are fourth-graders in 2020 will have had a school lunch every day for their entire education.** These students will be less likely to have missed school and fallen behind in their learning due to hunger. For us, this is a great achievement.

## Local farmers successfully become the key food suppliers for MSLI's school lunch program

For the last three years, MSLI has been working with local farmer groups to grow the crops used in the school lunch program. This past season was our most successful yet and demonstrated the value of long-term investment and the strength of our model. Farmers produced more than half of the school lunch program needs for the crops they grew (including beans and vegetables) and more than doubled their household income from the sales. This meets our dual goals of (1) increasing MSLI's sustainability by developing a local supply chain and (2) stimulating agricultural production and providing a source of income for local farmers.

### Percentage of foods used in MSLI's school lunches produced by local farmer groups

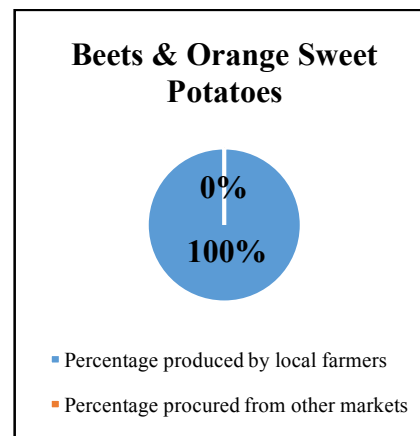
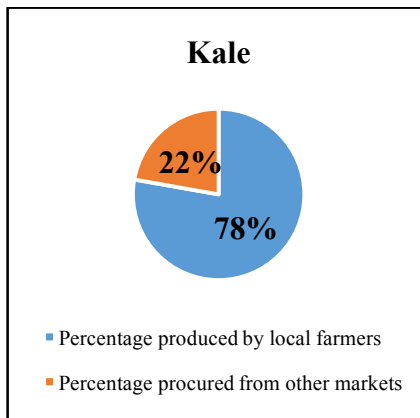
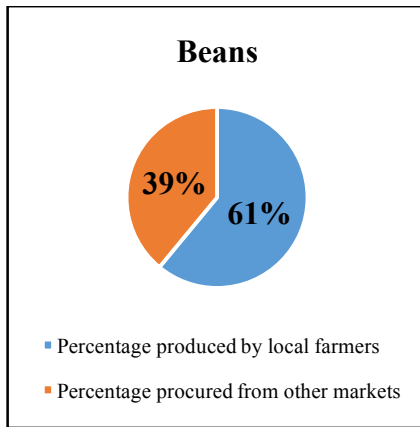


Figure 6: Farmers from Duvane village show off their sacks of beans, ready to sell to MSLI's school lunch program. Beans were the top-earning crop for these farmers, providing quality nutrition for the school lunches as well as income for rural farming families.



Figure 7: MSLI agronomist, Jaime, demonstrates the correct way to harvest kale so that it grows back and can be harvested again. Kale is one of the most nutritious things you can eat, and MSLI's school meals are packed with it thanks to the farmers' bountiful production.

## Farmers more than doubled their household income in 2019



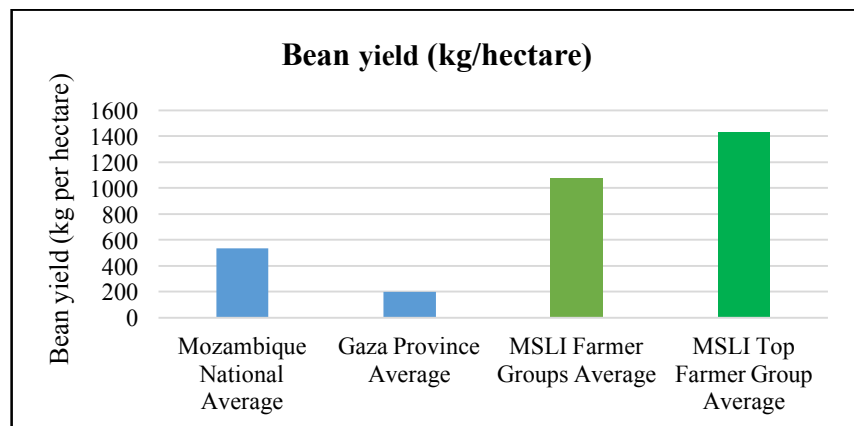
Figure 8: Farmers ready to sell tomatoes to MSLI. As an anchor buyer, MSLI has created a new market opportunity for farmers.

The average annual household income for the farmers we partnered with was just \$200 before the MSLI program began. In the 2019 main growing season (March – October, depending on the crop), on average **each farmer earned \$279 in profit** from their MSLI co-op farm. The top third most productive farmers earned an average of **\$372 in profit!** This is money they would not have made otherwise and raises the average annual household income to almost \$500. 88% of that profit came from direct sales to MSLI’s school lunch program and the remaining 12% came from sales to other buyers and their family’s consumption. We are very proud of the hard work our farmer groups put in to provide quality nutrition for kids in their community schools, and thrilled that these **farmers doubled, and in some cases tripled their household income.**

### Higher yields and higher profitability

Investing in farmers’ capacity to grow more food and providing a guaranteed market for them to sell to is what makes MSLI’s model work. At the end of the season, farmers repay a portion of our initial investment, and MSLI makes back the rest by saving 20% on food costs by purchasing food directly from local farmers. This comprehensive strategy creates real opportunity for local farmers and is cost neutral for MSLI.

By facilitating farmers’ access to agricultural inputs like seeds, tractor services, and irrigation equipment, farmers are producing far above average. For example, farmers’ yields for beans last season averaged twice the national average and over five times the provincial average for Gaza Province where we are based. With the right inputs and techniques, Mozambican farmers can really produce a lot of food!



Source: Non-MSLI from a 2016 USAID report: <http://www.acdivoca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Report-No31-Mozambique-VCA-Report.pdf>



Figure 9: After harvesting, MSLI helps farmers to store beans and keep them fresh. These special hermetic bags keep out moisture and pests, ensuring that the beans are top-quality for students to consume in the school months to come.

### *Student Profile*

Nequiwa Silva Ubisse is an 8-year old student in first grade at Cumba Primary School. She lost both her parents at a young age and so now she lives with her uncle, along with her 6-year old brother. According to her teacher, Nequiwa always goes to school even though she sometimes struggles with her studies. If not for the school lunch program, her teacher thinks she might have dropped out of school by this point but he hopes that she will make progress slowly but surely. Nequiwa is very shy, but when we asked her what she thought about the school lunch, she smiled widely and said “na swi rhandza!” In the local language of Changana, this means “I love it!”



*Figure 10: Nequiwa holds up her school lunch of bean stew with xima.*

### **The MSLI Team in Action**



*Figure 11: The cooks at Bombôfo Primary School, serve up lunch. To date, the cooks have never failed to serve lunch every school day of the year.*



*Figure 12: Tavina with a group of children too young to enroll in school yet. They often tag along to school with their siblings to get lunch anyway and MSLI always ensures there is enough for everyone who comes.*



*Figure 13: Cara has to write a lot of reports, but she loves getting some mud on her boots too.*



*Figure 14: Jaime takes a selfie to show the growth of the beans this year, with the help of his technical guidance.*



*Figure 15: Roberto inquires about a student's studies at Duvane Annex Primary School.*

## Plans for 2020

- MSLI is excited to announce that we will be expanding to a **sixth school** – Chate Primary School – this year, serving **225 more students** every day. The Mozambican school year starts the first week of February and we are gearing up to be ready to launch on day one! Thank you to our supporters who made this possible!
- MSLI's farmer groups will be expanding their farm size in 2020, producing even more of the food we serve in school lunches and increasing food security in their communities.
- MSLI is investing in the start-up of a chicken producing cooperative in the village of Bombôfo. This chicken co-op will provide a large percentage of the chickens used in the school lunch program, while also generating income for its members.



Figure 16: Students are all smiles on full bellies after a tasty school lunch.

### **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. The two best options to donate are:
  - ❖ Donate via **PayPal** through our website:  
<https://www.mozambiqueschoollunchinitiative.org/donate>
  - ❖ Write a **check** to: Mozambique School Lunch Initiative  
Send to: Cara Myers, 5105 S. Park Lane, Spokane, WA 99223
- 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's work, 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](mailto:cara.ann.myers@gmail.com)



Figure 17: Even the teachers get excited to help with the school lunch program. At Candiza Primary School, one of the teachers pitched in to help serve beets this year.