



Mozambique School Lunch INITIATIVE



Happy Children's Day in Mozambique!

June 1st is Children's Day in Mozambique, and we were very happy to celebrate in the schools where we work. Our mission is to ensure these children have the opportunities to grow and thrive throughout their childhood.

School lunches make learning more fun!

Celebrating seven years working in Mozambique!

Last month marked the Mozambique School Lunch Initiative's 7th-year Anniversary! We first started the school lunch program initiative back in May of 2016 in response to a devastating drought that was causing many kids to drop out of school. Since then, we have grown tremendously, driven by our passion to improve children's nutrition and education, and to ultimately create opportunities for kids to succeed.



A blast from the past... Images from 2016 during MSLI's first months starting the school lunch program. Talvina and Roberto were instrumental in launching the initiative, working with the local community and even helping prepare the meals in the initial days. Hundreds of children showed up to school for lunch, enjoying big plates of rice and chicken – a true joy!



Exciting updates this year!

Eggs! Improving MSLI's access to nutritious food for the school lunches

In April, MSLI kicked off a partnership with Higest, a chicken inputs company in Mozambique, which agreed to support the start-up of a chicken-egg cooperative in one of our villages. The Higest professionals trained a group of four farmers (three women) and donated 208 laying hens, the equipment, and enough chicken feed for the group's first month of production. The cooperative is now producing about **200 eggs every day, which MSLI is buying and integrating directly into our school lunch program for added nutrition.** We are prioritizing the preschool children, who get two eggs a week to increase the protein in their diets. Eggs have one of the most digestible forms for protein, and the kids love them! For MSLI, this project has been a sustainable way to increase access to nutritious foods for the kids, while also benefiting the local farmers who are now earning an income by selling eggs.



Zaida now earns an income from selling eggs to MSLI's school lunch program.



Loading MSLI's truck with eggs for the schools.



Children at school enjoying a boiled egg alongside their plate of bean stew and rice.



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Investing in school buses

Last year, we saw the critical role that the free school transportation service provided for students. And this year, the number of students jumped from 147 to 304! With this level of demand (and expected to grow further next year), the MSLI team decided to make this a priority investment. In February, after much searching in second-hand markets, we finally found and purchased our first school bus. And in May, we purchased a second! These 34-seater Toyotas provide a safe, reliable way for kids from rural communities to get to high school.



Students boarding MSLI's school bus to go to Manjangué secondary school.

We've also installed a speaker system on the buses to play a Mozambican radio show called Ouro Negro that delivers health and empowerment messaging for adolescents through stories. Each school bus is making multiple trips a day to carry all the students, and we're thrilled to see the incredible impact this has in increasing students' access to high school.

Supporting adolescent students through our girls and boys clubs

This year we have continued with our mentorship program for the students attending secondary school, led by Tucha Rangel and Dino Morais. Our curriculum focuses on developing the students' self-esteem, goal-setting, exploring future opportunities, learning about adolescent health, and keeping them motivated to stay in school.

We are especially excited about our efforts to support girls' education in Mozambique, as this is gaining salience as a high-priority area for the country. Indeed, in honor of Mozambican National Women's Day on April 7th, Nyelete Mondlane, the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, argued that **the main ingredient for women's empowerment lies in the retention of girls at school**, in an environment of dignified coexistence with the family and the community. "The family and the community should help girls remain in school until the final stage of their studies until they choose their professional destiny", she said.



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Professional speaker sessions

Over the course of the school year, we are organizing professional speaker series so that students can have the chance to learn about job pathways and get inspired for their own futures. So far, we have had a police woman and a hospital technician come and speak with the students. The students loved being able to ask them questions.



High school students engaging with a policewoman, invited by MSLI, to share about her career and journey.

Addressing menstrual hygiene challenges

Many adolescent girls lack the resources to buy menstrual products each month, and this interferes with their school attendance. In partnership with BeGirl, MSLI has provided menstrual hygiene products so the girls can better manage their monthly cycle and not miss school.



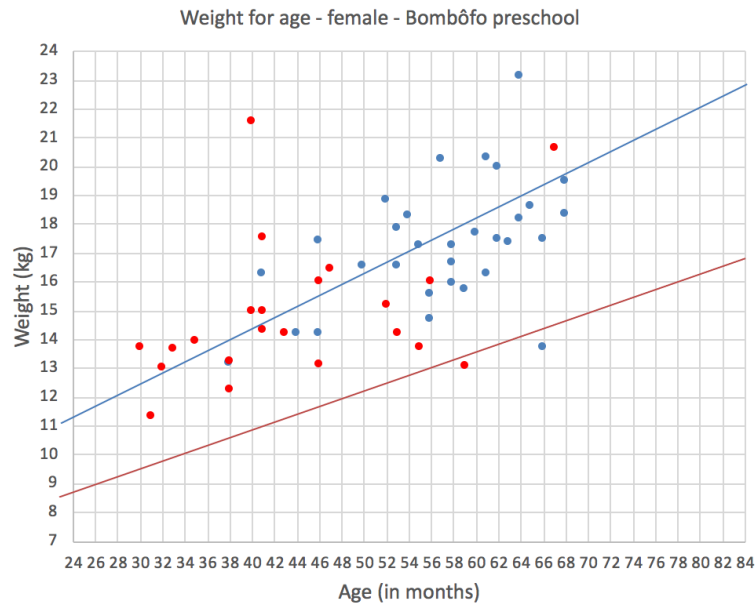
Secondary school girls excitedly showing off their BeGirl products last month.

Tracking anthropometric health outcomes for preschool students

The first 5 years of life are widely considered critical for a child's growth and development. For this reason, we pay close attention to the nutrition of our preschool students, measuring height and weight and tracking in relation to their age. The chart below shows the weight for age for female children at Bombôfo preschool at the start of the school year (February 2023). The blue dots represent the children who attended MSLI's preschool last year, and the red dots represent the children who have not attended preschool yet. The blue line is the median weight-for-age, as defined by the World Health Organization. Children with measurements close to this line are in the healthy range. The red line indicates the weight-for-age that classifies a child as underweight. We are very pleased to see that only one female student who previously attended MSLI's preschool in Bombôfo falls into that category.



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Malouluane Primary School - the 8th School in MSLI's School Lunch Program

We are excited to announce that we have expanded our school lunch program to an eighth primary school this year -- Malouluane Primary School. One of the teachers at this school used to be a teacher at another school where MSLI works, and he has been advocating for his new school to be included in our lunch program ever since he started. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, we were able to launch the school lunch program in Malouluane Primary School at the end of last month. Right now, there are just 25 students at this school, but we expect more to start enrolling now that there is the incentive of the school lunch program.



Students at Malouluane Primary School enjoying lunch under a shady tree!



A second-grader at Malouluane with a hearty school lunch.



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Interested in getting involved?

We are truly inspired by all the champions who are making this work possible in Mozambique. We look forward to sharing more updates over the course of the year!

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, MSLI's work continues to grow and reach more children in rural Mozambique. Each program is an investment in children's health and education, building the foundation for them to rise out of poverty.

We are always looking for ways to expand our programs to more communities, and your support can make that happen. For example, this year we'd love to:

- Expand our school lunch program to 1-3 more primary schools
- Build and open 2 more preschools
- Launch a school bus service to cover 4 more villages
- Kickstart 3 more farmer groups

All of this depends on the resources we receive from funding organizations and generous individuals. It truly takes a team effort to make this happen, and we appreciate everyone who has been along with us for the journey!

Donate directly on our website –

<https://www.mozambiqueschoollunchinitiative.org/donate>

If you'd like to **donate with a credit or debit card**, [you can do so here and just select the "Donate with a Debit or Credit Card" option.](#)

Donate to MSLI's projects on GlobalGiving

[Click here to donate to our school bus program](#)

[Click here to donate to our school lunch program](#)

[Click here to donate to our preschool program](#)

If you're **in the U.S.**, you can make a check out to "Mozambique School Lunch Initiative" and send to:

Mozambique School Lunch Initiative

5105 S. Park Lane

Spokane, WA 99223

If you're **in Mozambique**, reach out to Ahuti Kumar for the best ways to donate locally!
ahuti@mozambiqueschoollunchinitiative.org

A huge thanks to all of our supporters!



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Secondary school students getting ready for one of the after-school club meetings led by MSLI's adolescent program mentors, Tucha and Dino.

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