



**Building a strong
foundation for more kids
than ever this year!**

This year, MSLI is serving meals to 12,969 students every day! This includes children at our 14 preschools - 12 of which were newly opened this year. Childhood is a critical and unique window of opportunity to shape a child's life and put them on a better trajectory. It is the best time to make an investment in their future. MSLI sees this first-hand in Mozambique every single day, and we take it to heart. That is why MSLI takes a holistic approach to improving children's nutrition and education at each stage of a child's life cycle.



Two students enjoying lunch at Tlawene Primary School - a new school in MSLI's program.

Big kitchens for lots of students

MSLI serves schools of all different sizes, ranging from 19 students to 1,275 students! Our community approach means that we adapt to the school size, while always ensuring high-quality meals for all the students. At the big schools, it's quite an operation - with over 50 kg of dry beans needed every day!



At MSLI's largest school - Combonune Estação Primary School - 1,275 students are fed every day. We have 12 cooks who prepare giant pots of food to serve the students, ensuring that everyone gets fed during the lunch hour.

The difference a meal makes - bringing kids back to school

In Mabalane District (where MSLI serves 41 primary schools), we have seen significant impacts of the school lunch program on student enrollment and attendance. While the official age to start the first grade in Mozambique is 6 years, in some communities, this does not happen. This year, we have documented a surge of children ages 7, 8, and even 9 years of age who are now enrolling in the first grade, thanks to the incentive of the school lunch program.



These first graders at Chaves Primary School are already between 7-9 years of age, which is a couple of years behind when they should have started school. But now they are in school and ready to learn!

We are also seeing many children who had dropped out of school in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, who are now re-enrolling in school. These are often the most vulnerable kids, who struggled to learn on an empty stomach. But with a big meal at school each day, they now have the energy to study again. And not only are children re-enrolling, **attendance rates are over 99%** - largely thanks to the school lunch program.



This child in Tsocate village dropped out of school in the third grade in 2023, as going to school was too hard on an empty stomach. But now she has enrolled again and getting a hearty meal every day.

What does it take to start a preschool?

MSLI's preschool program expansion kicked off in December last year, as we hired a dedicated program manager and began recruiting qualified candidates from the local communities to become preschool teachers. In January, MSLI collaborated with the District government to host a 4-week training for the preschool teacher candidates. The training is based on a standardized curriculum, developed by UNICEF and the government of Mozambique. After the training, MSLI selected the top 50% of best performing candidates to be hired as preschool teachers. **MSLI now has 40 preschool teachers across 14 preschools, 90% of whom are women!** The new preschools opened on February 3rd this year and are **serving 1,358 young children.**



The preschool teacher training included practical activities, like how to create educational props out of local materials.



MSLI's preschool teachers with their certificates of completion of the teacher training course.



MSLI's preschool teachers, putting their training into practice!

What about the even littler ones?



A two-year old child who showed up for a bowl of nutritious porridge at Machua's preschool

The first motivation for MSLI's preschool program was when we saw younger kids tagging along to school with their siblings because they knew they would get a free lunch. In the village of Machua, we are now seeing the same thing happen at the preschools. The preschool is intended for children 3-5 years of age, and yet we had 60 two-year olds who were also showing up. We didn't want to turn these children away, but the preschool curriculum is not quite suited for such young ones. So MSLI opened a special class (a crèche) for these two-year olds, to focus on their particular needs. For now, this is just a pilot in one village, but we will see how it goes!

Betting big on beans

Beans are the chief source of protein for many of the meals served in MSLI's school lunch program. **This year alone, MSLI will need to buy over 127,000 pounds of beans to supply the school lunch program!** Finding that many beans to buy is not easy, so MSLI has decided to go to the source - local farmers. MSLI is supporting farmers to buy the quality seeds needed to expand their bean production. At the end of the season, farmers agree to sell 90% of their production to MSLI, a true win-win -- supporting the local economy and providing enough beans for our growing school lunch program.



Farmers, local government, and the MSLI team have come together to support increased bean production in the Chokwe region this season!



Farmers receiving quality bean seeds at the start of the growing season!



A farmer from Chate village with her bean seeds. She will be planting her fields in the next couple of weeks.



Local farmers are natural collaborators for MSLI! It's a win-win for the community and the schools!

Advancing students' secondary school education - extra support goes a long ways

This year, MSLI saw more students than ever pass the 10th grade - a major milestone in their education given the tough standardized exams that must be passed to progress to the 11th grade. We are getting closer and closer to helping more students complete secondary school, which is a major feat in a country where 2/3 of students drop out by grade 5. In the communities where these students come from, they will be among the first to have completed secondary education, and we believe that this education will transform their lives, and that of their communities as well.



Students at MSLI's "Center of Excellence" at Manjangue Secondary School, where they receive additional tutoring and training to support their learning and life skills.

Update on the unrest and uncertainty in Mozambique

As we noted in our last newsletter, Mozambique experienced a period of turmoil following the October 2024 elections. This led to disruptions in supply chains, food shortages, and price hikes. Luckily, things seemed to have calmed down since March, protests have largely stopped, and many things are getting back to "normal."

Throughout this all, MSLI has focused on what we do best -- serving children in vulnerable communities. No matter what the politics are, both in Mozambique and internationally, at the end of the day, these children's lives are taking shape now. We have the opportunity to change the trajectory of these children's lives through better nutrition and education in their critical years, and the clock does not stop even when the external conditions change or become more challenging. That's why MSLI is more committed than ever to investing in children, as they are truly the path to a better future in Mozambique.



In rural areas, MSLI's school lunch program is typically the only safety net for kids, which is essential to buffer against shocks like the current political crisis.

How to support

If you're able to make a gift to support MSLI's work in Mozambique, we would be most grateful. Each and every donation goes directly to supporting children, providing essential nutrition to students, preschool education to young kids, and mentorship for adolescents – all part of our approach to breaking the cycle of poverty in Mozambique. Thank you for being part of our 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.](#)

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!



MSLI's school lunches are served to thousands of kids every day. You can help us grow that number even more in 2025!

Learn more: <https://www.mozambiqueschoollunchinitiative.org/>

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