Mozambique School Lunch INITIATIVE

Nutrition for growth - addressing a fundamental child need

Every school day, MSLI is serving nutritious meals to 12,969 students! It seems like a basic thing, but it makes a huge difference for kids who don't have much to eat at home and often go to school hungry. With the school meals program, we've seen attendance soar above 98% - when there's food, the children will come! MSLI's dedicated team works hard each day to manage all of the logistics of ensuring schools have quality food and are preparing it on time every day. Seeing those smiles at lunch time is our biggest motivation.

Girls at Chimunguane Primary School, enjoying their school lunch of xima and beans.

MSLI's cooks rise early every morning to prepare steaming pots of nutritious food, ready to serve hot at lunch time.

Project for Peace and MSLI: providing new opportunities for secondary school students to prepare for their futures

This summer, MSLI was thrilled to partner with Lauricenia Buque, a student attending Concordia College, and winner of the Kathryn Davis Project for Peace – a $10,000 award for students developing innovative, community-centered, and scalable responses to the world's most pressing issues. Having grown up in Mozambique, Lauricenia's passion for the power of education drove her to develop an initiative to help more Mozambican students take charge of their own futures. In collaboration with MSLI, she designed a four-week course called "Future Ready" to guide the students in MSLI's secondary school program through a series of workshops aimed at unlocking entrepreneurial thinking, identifying their personal strengths, and connecting them with opportunities for training and careers after they graduate from secondary school.

Secondary school students from Bombôfo village attend an entrepreneurship session led by Lauricenia Buque.

The course culminated with a visit to Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo (Mozambique's capital city), with structured sessions to provide students with valuable insights into vocational mentorship, career paths, and entrepreneurship. The visit was a resounding success, with students benefiting from peer-to-peer learning, networking, and inspiration to pursue their goals. Students also had the chance to meet and ask questions of entrepreneurs, learning from role models from various sectors. The field trip was an exciting experience for the all of the students, enhancing their knowledge, broadening their horizons and inspiring new ideas.

MSLI's secondary school students during the sessions at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo.

Breakout sessions in small groups encouraged every student to share their perspective, goals, and career ideas.

School gardens make meals more delicious and nutritious!

This year, MSLI has piloted a new initiative to support schools to set up school gardens to produce vegetables that can be incorporated in the school lunches – making the meals more delicious and nutritious! MSLI started out by selecting six schools in Mabalane District with good access to a water source. This is important, because in this arid region, many communities struggle with having enough water, even for cooking, and so it was critical to start with schools that had access to water that they'd be able to use for irrigating the vegetable gardens. At each school, there is a teacher responsible for looking after the garden, with the help of the parent teacher association. In May, the first seeds were sown – carrots, kale, beets, and onions, all of which can easily be cooked into a bean stew.

The parent teacher association at Covela Primary School, preparing the garden beds in May this year.

Months later, the garden at Covela Primary School is flourishing!

Three months later, the students were enjoying fresh veggies in their meals! The plan is for schools to harvest vegetables gradually over the next 2-3 months, boosting the nutrition of the school meals. Some vegetables, like kale, regrow after being cut, allowing multiple harvests. It cost MSLI just $78 to cover the start-up costs for each school garden, and the production is expected to far exceed this!

Cooks preparing the kale for the school lunch after harvesting it from the school garden earlier that morning.

Cooks add fresh vegetables after cooking the beans, ensuring that the veggies aren't overcooked and retain their maximum nutritional value.

The bean stew now includes kale from the garden!

Students loved the new addition!

MSLI's preschools – a place of play, learning, and – of course – good food!

With the expansion of MSLI's preschool program this year, we've been really excited to see how the new preschools are transforming young childrens' lives. Little kids who used to be shy, reserved, and undernourished, are now full of energy, singing songs with enthusiasm, and learning the fundamentals of letters, numbers and how to write. Each day, the children spend 5-8 hours at the preschool, facilitated by trained preschool teachers. They receive a nutritious breakfast and lunch, ensuring good nutrition at a critical age. MSLI's preschools are free for all children, ensuring that the most vulnerable can attend.

Celebrating the "Day of the African Child" at the Djodjo Preschool. The teachers organized special songs and dances for the children, and costumes with the traditional cloth worn in Mozambique – capulanas.

Rita, MSLI's preschool program manager, with a child completing the IDELA evaluation.

Earlier this year, the MSLI team used the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) – a rigorous, standardized global tool that measures children's early learning and development – to assess the status of the 5-year olds in MSLI's preschool program. The team randomly selected 60 children to complete the assessment, which included activities such as identifying shapes, solving puzzles, recognizing letters, counting and doing basic addition. Even in a few short months, we were surprised by how much the children had learned! MSLI plans on regularly conducting these assessments so that we can measure the impact of the preschools on the children's learning.

For most children at the preschools, this is the first time they are holding a pencil and writing on a piece of paper. Basic skills like these will go a long way to advance their learning when they get to the first grade.

Did you know? In Mozambique today, on average, a child is expected to complete only 7.6 years of school, according to UNESCO. Three additional years of preschool education is therefore a huge addition to a child's total learning!

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!

Every day, students line up across 62 schools, excited for a school lunch. Your support can help us reach even more kids across Mozambique!

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