



## Celebrating a decade of MSLI!



Children enjoying lunch at Machua Primary School.

**The power of school meals is in their consistency.** Day after day, year after year. A daily meal at school is something that a child can count on. And this matters. In the communities where MSLI works, school meals are a critical safety net for children who live in poverty. For the children we serve, a hot meal keeps them in school and helps them stay focused, energized, and ready to learn.



Students at MSLI's Center of Excellence at Manjangue Secondary School have a meal in between classes and their mentorship program.



From preschool to primary school to secondary school, MSLI ensures kids have the nutrition they need to stay in school and learn.

### Ten years of impact

Following the devastating floods earlier this year, the school meals we served helped ensure kids came back to school and had something to eat while their families recovered. It's easy to see the benefit in the short-term – preventing kids from suffering from hunger and dropping out of school during particularly extreme shocks. But MSLI is also playing the long game, because investing in children takes time and commitment. That's why MSLI is proud that once we start providing meals at a school, we have never once stopped. We believe that every child should have good nutrition at school – today, tomorrow, and 10 years from now. And we're here to make that happen.



The MSLI team celebrated our 10-year anniversary in May.

The MSLI team celebrated our 10-year anniversary by holding a gathering at MSLI's office, inviting some of the students, teachers, and cooks who have been with MSLI since its very beginning. While enjoying good food (as always), people shared what MSLI meant to them and how it has impacted them over the last decade. Here are some of their stories:



Professor Timóteo Matlane  
Director of Cumba Primary School

"Previously, the school faced many challenges – low student attendance, high number of dropouts. But after MSLI arrived, we started seeing this change. Now, students leave home in the morning without eating anything, arriving at school with the faith that they will have a hot meal. And this inspired me to collaborate with MSLI to help find creative ways for the community to support the program. The impacts of MSLI's program are visible – from the school meals, to the school buses, we can see it working."



Leta Ubisse  
Cook at Punguine Primary School

"Before MSLI came to Punguine, the children didn't go to school because they were hungry. They would leave home in the morning, but they wouldn't make it to school – they'd go into the bush instead to look for wild fruits to eat. Now the children always come to school because of the food. When I go to my farm early in the morning, I always make sure to get back to the school by 6am to start cooking, because I know the children are counting on me for lunch at school. Now I am famous in my village, and I am known by all the children as Grandmother Leta."



Jossefina Ubisse  
12<sup>th</sup> grade student at Manjangue  
Secondary School

"In 2016, I started receiving school lunches through MSLI. I was in the third grade. Today, I am 19 years old and am in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I take the MSLI school bus from my village to Manjangue Secondary School each day, and enjoy the English lessons at MSLI's Center of Excellence in the afternoons. After I graduate from secondary school, I want to go to teacher training to become a biology teacher. I also hope my younger brothers and sisters will continue to benefit from MSLI's programs."

We also asked MSLI staff members to reflect on their experiences working for MSLI. Here's what one of our staff, Tucha Rangel, had to say:



Tucha Rangel, Avança+ Program Mentor  
MSLI team member since 2022

***What motivates you to contribute to MSLI's mission?***

My inspiration in the work I do comes from knowing that my work has changed the way adolescents and their parents think. They have become more focused on improving the future of their children and students through education.

***Give an example of how MSLI has impacted someone's life.***

In 2024, a student named Florença from Candiza village graduated from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The next year, MSLI opened a preschool in her village, and she became one of the new preschool teachers. Florença was very happy, because after completing her studies, she is now able to contribute to the same program that helped her. She has become a source of motivation for her peers.



Tucha leads many of the health and life skills sessions at MSLI's Manjanguê Center of Excellence.

***Talk about a challenge you have faced in your work and how you overcame it.***

One difficult challenge was seeing an underage girl leave school because of an early marriage and pregnancy. After this happened, the team worked to find the girl and spoke with her husband and parents about allowing her to return to school. These efforts were successful, and we were able to help the girl return to school.



Tucha (far right) with the Avança+ students who won the Future Ready business competition.

***What is your dream for MSLI over the next five years?***

I see MSLI continuing to grow and expanding the project to other communities and provinces, reaching people who are underserved and in need.

## Focus on early foundations: eat, play, learn

One of the programs MSLI aims to expand this year is our community preschools. We've seen a big difference in the children who have attended MSLI's preschools over the last several years – they are better nourished, more active, speak Portuguese, and have started learning how to read, write, and count. They've also had the chance to learn through play, singing songs, and enjoying games with their preschool teachers and classmates. By getting young kids off to a healthy start, we are building the foundation for them to succeed.

Our community preschool program helps build strong bodies and minds. Early learning and cognitive stimulation create a base for future schooling, setting these kids up for success when they get to primary school and beyond. Preschool education is key to helping break the cycle of poverty. This is why we don't wait until primary school to support kids in Mozambique.



Children at Punguine preschool enjoying their fortified breakfast porridge.



Engaging in structured play is a great way to stimulate young minds.



Children enjoying outside games at Changulene preschool.



Preschoolers start learning how to hold a pencil, write the alphabet and numbers. These basic skills give them a big head start when they get to the first grade.

### Why is preschool so important?

Science shows that a child's brain is highly flexible and adaptable during the first five years, acting as a sponge for environmental stimuli. Positive, language-rich, and secure environments establish strong neurological pathways that lead to better school readiness and emotional health. And it doesn't have to be fancy! Evidence shows that simple, everyday interactions like talking, singing, and playing are powerful tools for early childhood brain development.



Who doesn't love story time – part of the daily routine at MSLI's preschools!



MSLI's preschool teachers spend time reading to the kids.

## The “MSLI” way

Over the last 10 years, MSLI has built an approach that truly engages the local community through our work. The MSLI team regularly holds community meetings to ensure that teachers, parents, and village leaders are all informed and engaged with the programs. This is an essential part of building trust, understanding and support.



The Avanç+ team holding a parent meeting at Punguine village.



The MSLI team holds a community meeting in Covela village to discuss parents' engagement in the school garden and lunch program.

MSLI counts on local community collaboration to make our programs work. Of course, the cooks and preschool teachers are hired directly from the local communities. But there are many other ways we engage with communities as well:

**Local farmers** grow beans and other crops for the school lunch program, receiving quality seeds on interest-free credit from MSLI so that they are well-equipped to plant their fields and produce a bountiful harvest. MSLI's agronomist, Jaime Chichango (right), coordinates the bulk purchase of bean seed, then delivers the seeds to the farmer associations MSLI partners with in Chokwe District. Over the next few months, Jaime will continue to provide technical support to farmers – helping them with the proper techniques to increase yields.



**Parents** of the students support our school gardens, producing fresh vegetables that can be added to the school meals. At the start of the school year, parents work with the MSLI team to prepare the soil and plant the seeds for the school garden.

In secondary school, **students** in the Avança+ program lend a hand in the kitchen – including boys, helping break down gender stereotypes and ensure both girls and boys have basic cooking skills.



## Taking a problem-driven approach

Our goal is to see the children who are attending MSLI's preschools today make it all the way through secondary school. That's why we work closely with the community to create an ecosystem of support and provide continuity for each child to pursue a full education. When it comes to secondary school, MSLI's model is not one-size fits all. While our mission is consistent, our approach adapts to the needs and challenges of different communities.

For some communities, a school bus is the most cost-effective (and socially accepted) way to ensure students from rural areas can attend secondary school. But a school bus just isn't feasible for some of the most remote communities. That's why this year MSLI helped rehabilitate the boarding house by Hókwè Secondary School, fixing broken windows, repairing leaks in the roof, and buying new mattresses for the bunk beds so that the boarding house could be fully utilized. The boarding house provides a safe option for students from far-away villages to continue their studies.



While the District government runs the Hókwè boarding house, MSLI helped with repairs so that it can now accommodate more students.



Students outside the Hókwè boarding house with Innocentia Zitha, one of MSLI's Avança+ mentors.

## 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  
44521 SE 166<sup>th</sup> St  
North Bend, WA 98045

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

A huge thanks to all of our supporters!



More meals = more kids in school!

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