Mozambique School Lunch INITIATIVE

Going where the children are: reaching 19,000 more students!

Children enjoying school lunches served by MSLI.

Greetings from Mozambique! MSLI has been busy these past few months! Since July, the MSLI team has been preparing a big expansion of our school meals program, **reaching 19,000 more students across 190 schools** in five districts of northern Gaza Province: Mapai, Chigubo, Chicualacuala, Massangena, and the western side of the river in Mabalane District. That is more than double the number of children MSLI serves today!

Food insecurity is very high in these districts, and for many children, a nutritious meal at school can make all the difference. But these schools are remote! And in several districts, there is a major river dividing the district, with communities (but no bridges) lining both sides of the river. To reach these schools, the MSLI team has to cross the river in a wooden boat. We are undeterred!

To get to some of the new schools, MSLI's team has to load their motorbikes into a wooden boat to ford the Elefantes River!

While the infrastructure to reach many of the new schools is limited, the MSLI team finds a way.

The MSLI team chose to go where the need is greatest.

Earlier this year, the MSLI team was assessing the opportunities for where to expand our program to. When it came time to decide, the MSLI team got to vote: should we grow in one district that was more densely populated and easier to reach, or go to these four new districts in northern Gaza Province that were much harder to reach? The vote was unanimous. Everyone voted to go where it's harder. That decision shows the true spirit and dedication of the MSLI team. They go where the need is greatest. We go where the children are. Even if that means a lot more hard work in difficult conditions, we embrace it.

The MSLI team met with government officials in each of the new districts to build a strong partnership.

Following the government meetings, the MSLI team held community meetings at each new school to discuss the school feeding program and ensure community buy-in. This was a LOT of meetings.

More schools become part of MSLI's program.

In preparation for the school feeding expansion, the MSLI team has been visiting each school to assess its conditions, verify enrollment, and meet with teachers and parents to share the goals of the school feeding program. In each community, MSLI has been very well received. The MSLI staff have continuously reiterated the importance of reaching these new schools, as the need is very high and few other programs (if any) reach these communities.

A new school to be added to MSLI's program. These children will now benefit from daily school meals!

Students studying in a classroom at one of the new schools added to MSLI's program.

MSLI celebrates International Day of the Girl.

On October 11th, MSLI's Avança+ program organized an event to celebrate the International Day of the Girl. The theme was "My rights, my voice, I advance further", which goes with the Portuguese translation of the Avança+ program, which means to advance further. The goal of the event was to amplify the importance of girls' education, advocating for girls to stay in school and chart their own futures.

Students – both girls and boys – from the Avança+ program attended and engaged in discussions about their goals and dreams. The event created a lot of energy and motivation, inspiring the students to persevere in their studies and feel excited about what lies ahead!

Celebrating the International Day of the Girl with MSLI's Avança+ students.

MSLI's mentors work to support the students and encourage them (and their families) to stay in school.

School gardens produce another crop for school meals!

Last year, MSLI piloted school gardens at six schools in Mabalane District. This year, we expanded our school gardens initiative to more schools, and they are already bearing fruit (or vegetables, to be precise)! The gardens boost the nutrition of the school meals and ensure there is a source of fresh produce right at the school.

Teachers and cooks prepare to harvest kale from a school garden for the school meals.

Cooking for nutrition: MSLI organizes a nutrition training for the cooks!

MSLI's cooks are our dedicated frontline workers, rising early every morning to prepare hot meals for the children in their communities. During the 1-week school break in August, Talvina, MSLI's School Feeding Program Manager for Chokwe District, collaborated with the nutritionists at the Chokwe District Health Services to lead a nutrition training for the cooks in our program. The training focused on the best preparation techniques for preserving the nutrients in the food – making sure every meal delivers as much nourishment as possible to the kids.

The cooks also enjoyed the chance to ride the MSLI school bus! We took advantage of the school break to use the bus to bring cooks from many villages together at the central training location – MSLI's Center of Excellence in Manjangue.

Cooks with the District Nutritionist, doing a cooking demo at MSLI's Center of Excellence.

Cooks riding the MSLI school bus on their way to the training in Manjangue.

MSLI received a visit from the Government of Mozambique and the World Bank

In September, MSLI received a visit from Mozambique's Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Gender, along with the World Bank team leading the INTEGRA project. The Mozambique Human Development Integrated Project (INTEGRA) is a new program approved in 2025 – a $100 million grant from the World Bank to the Government of Mozambique – aimed at improving education outcomes and delivering integrated health and social services to school-age children and their families in the most vulnerable districts of Mozambique.

The Ministry representatives and World Bank team came to learn more about MSLI's work, and visited Bombôfo Primary School, where we implement all three of our programs – community preschools, school meals, and Avança+, our program for secondary school students. MSLI is increasingly becoming a reference that others in Mozambique look to, and we are proud to share our experience!

Representatives from the Ministries and World Bank with the MSLI team at Bombôfo Primary School, which MSLI has served since 2017.

A preschool teacher facilitates a morning song and dance at MSLI's Bombôfo preschool.

MSLI signs a new partnership with Save the Children

In September, MSLI signed a new partnership with Save the Children to be a technical advisor for their "Nourish to Learn" school feeding program, supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Nourish to Learn will reach 148,508 school-aged children over the life of the project and feed approximately 70,000 children every year, working across 245 primary schools in the Magude, Manhiça, Moamba, and Matutuine districts of Maputo Province.

As a key technical partner, MSLI will provide technical guidance and leadership in developing a graduation roadmap, and in setting up a local procurement system that connects farmer groups to the school feeding program in 20 schools – much like MSLI's own partnership with local bean farmers. MSLI will also contribute to the project's goal of enabling evidence-based policy and practice that supports the sustainability and expansion of Mozambique's National School Feeding Program, PRONAE. It's a wonderful opportunity to share what we've learned over the last ten years and help even more children across Mozambique!

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.

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 166th 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

A huge thanks to all of our supporters!

Your support can help school meals reach more kids!

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