



August 2020 – Newsletter

Dear MSLI supporter,

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well. Schools in Mozambique remain closed due to COVID-19, but our work continues. We are delivering monthly food baskets to all students across the six schools we serve. The baskets are stocked with key staples and fresh produce purchased from the local farmer groups we support. As always, we are grateful for our supporters who make this work possible.



Students at Chate B Primary School with their June food baskets.



Students at Duvane Primary School with their August food baskets.

“A little grandmother told me today that she is very thankful because she is having some support. She said that this morning she did not have anything to cook, but thanks to her granddaughter who is studying in school, now she has 12.5 kg of flour and beans. She didn’t know where she was going to get the money to buy a 12.5 kg sack of flour, but thanks to her granddaughter being in school, now they have something.”

–Talvina Ualane, MSLI Program Supervisor



A student with her food basket full of local vegetables.

MSLI's Ongoing COVID-19 Response

The MSLI team is as committed as ever to ensuring that kids get the nutritional support they need, both now and when schools reopen. Childhood malnutrition has long-term consequences for both physical and cognitive development. It is essential that these kids are not going hungry at home now so that they are ready to learn when they get back to school.

MSLI has adapted quickly to meet the needs of students and their communities as we navigate through this uncharted territory together. In April and May, we started by providing food baskets to orphans and vulnerable children at each school—about one-third of the 1,112 students we serve. But by June, food security in rural communities had deteriorated even further, and most children and their families were facing the risk of hunger. We expanded to cover all of the families with children in the six schools we serve and have distributed 970 food baskets every month since June.

However, food baskets cost significantly more than the school lunch program. It costs about \$5.50 per child per month to feed children through our school lunch program, but \$15 per monthly food basket. This is because at home, the food is typically cooked and shared with the student's family members as well. In order to ensure that each student is still getting the nutrition they need, we increased portion sizes substantially.



A mother and her daughter from the Bombôfo community, ready to go home with their monthly food basket.



A young boy at Duvane Primary School shows off one of the huge beets in his August food basket.

MSLI's food basket distributions so far:

- Number of months MSLI has distributed food baskets: 5
- Number of meals per food basket: 110
- Total number of meals delivered through the food baskets: 407,550



—Mama Rosina, cook at Cumba Primary School

What's in MSLI's food baskets?

- 27.5 pounds of fortified maize flour
- 11 pounds of beans
- Local vegetables, including kale, beets, and tomatoes

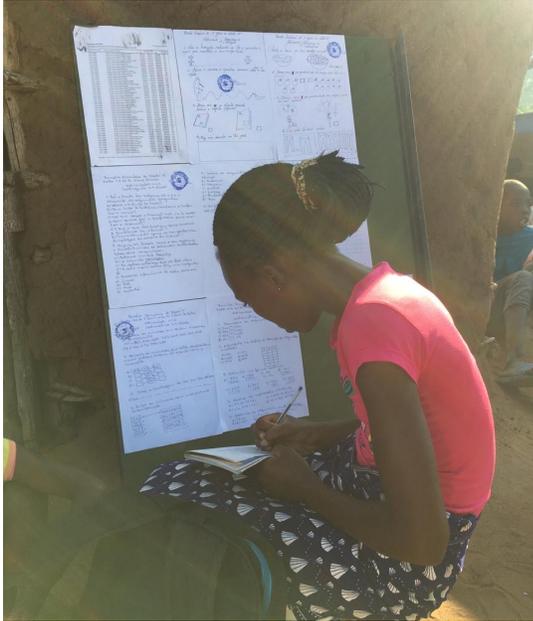
A cook's perspective

“In my opinion, it was good that MSLI opted to distribute food to our children because this saved our children from the hunger that we are facing right now due to the coronavirus. We don't know until when we will be battling against this disease, but we are grateful to MSLI for the initiative.”

Although MSLI's cooks are not in the school kitchens five days a week as usual, they are vital members of our team and help organize food basket distributions. Our cooks ensure COVID-19 safety measures are taken during the distribution and that each student goes home with their allocated food basket. We have continued to provide our cooks with full pay during this challenging time.

Remote learning in rural Mozambique

As of August 19th, Mozambique has 3,045 confirmed cases of COVID-19. However, given the weak capacity of the health system in Mozambique, the government has maintained strict precautions to prevent the spread of the virus. Under a phased reopening plan, primary schools may begin reopening in November, though this plan is still subject to change. Over the last several months, teachers have been visiting the schools to post worksheets on blackboards outside. The students then come and copy down the worksheets to work on at home. Although students are doing their best to learn from home, many struggle—especially younger students and those whose caregivers (parents or grandparents) are illiterate and unable to help with homework.



A student at Chate B Primary School copies down her monthly worksheet so she can work on it at home.



Students hold up corrected worksheets after receiving them back from their teacher.

A parent's perspective

“MSLI has done really well because ever since the schools closed, the students have continued doing their school activities because they know that the monthly food baskets are the same as the lunches they would eat in school. The children are very responsive and willing to come to school to receive their worksheets and do their homework because they are still receiving this monthly food support from MSLI.”



– Mama Leta, one of the cooks for MSLI and president of the parent-school council for Punguine Primary School



– Professor Rachid of Punguine Primary School

A teacher's perspective

“MSLI had to adapt to a new way of working when the pandemic hit. It wouldn't have been good if MSLI had stopped working when schools closed because there are kids that are really in need and depend on the school lunches.”

Our farmer groups

This year, we added Chate Primary School to our school lunch program and began working with a 10-member farmer group from the Chate community. Using the lessons we've learned from our previous farm group experiences, MSLLI was able to jumpstart the process with this new group. In the first season they have successfully been cultivating five acres of beans, orange sweet potatoes, and vegetables. We have instituted COVID-19 best practices in social distancing and hygiene so that our agronomist, Jaime, can continue to provide the training and support they need to increase production and make a profitable return.

In total, this season we are working with 41 farmers across four farmer groups who are cultivating 20 acres of land. The fresh produce provides delicious nutrition for the children and ensures that we remain a stable buyer for our farmer groups. Jaime has also been teaching our farmer groups about the nutritional advantages of eating beet greens, which are rich in many essential vitamins and minerals. Doing so adds variety to the diets of local families and improves nutrition in the wider community.



Harvesting kale for the monthly food baskets on Duvane farm.



Jaime, MSLLI's agronomist, with Ms. Chawane and her bean crop on the Cumba farm.

Donate to MSLI

You can provide a monthly food basket to a student and their family **for just \$15.**

MSLI is a 501(c)3 organizations and all donations are tax exempt.

Donate via PayPal or by credit card through our website:
<https://www.mozambiqueschoollunchinitiative.org/donate>

Write a check to:
Mozambique School Lunch Initiative
Send to:
Cara Myers
5105 S. Park Lane
Spokane, WA 99223



A student at Cumba Primary School carries her 12.5 kg bag of maize flour home.

For more information:

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/mozambiqueschoollunchinitiative/

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