

Summary Project Details and First Update May 2024

The "School Garden Project" in Mbamba Bay, Tanzania, aims to transform unused school grounds into productive farming areas, providing seeds and fertilizer. The project previously provided lunch to Form 4 students to support their exam preparations and aims to extend the program to all forms, lessening the burden on parents.

Fields were prepared and planting was started in fall 2023, at the beginning of the rainy season. Norwegian experts were available to train the schools in sustainable farming, and the first plants emerged in December 2023.

During the February 2024 site visit, we saw that six of the seven selected secondary schools participated actively in the program, and they were expecting a favorable harvest. Students and teachers alike exhibited high enthusiasm. Challenges include theft, logistical issues, and uneven maize growth, but the community's continued engagement and the setup of additional private maize fields near the schools have been positive outcomes.

Newest Developments, Second Update July 2024

Maize harvesting has been completed in May and June across the participating schools, with varying levels of success. St. Paul's school achieved the best outcome, yielding 107 bags of maize from 10 acres. Each bag has a weight of approximately 100 kg.

The harvest involved picking the maize cobs from the plants, transporting them to the schools, manually removing kernels, and drying them in classrooms before storage in large bags. New seeds have also been prepared, following a video in which the Norwegian farming experts describe the procedure.

Several issues arose during the harvest: excessive rain caused leaching of fertilizers during the growth phase, and some corn to rot during the harvest. Additionally, theft and the use of maize for student meals were reported. Some fields proved less suitable for maize production than others, due to soil quality.

Two schools proactively included rice as another source of carbohydrates in their farming program and were able to produce significant amounts right away (45 bags in total).

Despite these challenges, the school communities are very eager to continue growing their own food. They are highly motivated to work on addressing the above listed issues and improving future harvests.

Outlook

One option to consider for the next round of farming (season 2024/2025) is to complement the maize and rice production with cassava, a versatile crop that plays an integral role in food security and livelihoods across Africa, particularly in rural areas where mechanized farming is not prevalent. Its ability to grow in poor soil conditions and provide high-caloric food makes it an essential crop for many communities in the larger Mbamba Bay area. Maize tends to provide a more balanced set of nutrients, whereas cassava is primarily a high-energy food. Both crops can complement each other in a diet to ensure a broader nutritional intake.

Table 1: Secondary schools participating in the School Garden Project in season 2023/2024

School	Students	Acres	Seeds [kg] received	Fertilizer [bags] received	Bags of maize harvested (100 kg each)
Mango	868	6	40	18	30
St Paul's	1136	10	80	38	107
Lundo	616	8	64	24	42 + 39 bags of rice
Limbo	898	8	56	24	21
Unberkant	386	5	40	15	7 + 6 bags of rice
Nyasa	613	5	40	15	8
Mkali					joining Q4 2024
Lovund					joining Q4 2024
Mbamba Bay					on hold