



Skills and Knowledge Fight Malnutrition Challenge

Mozambique is one of the world’s poorest countries. Ten years ago, in the aftermath of a destructive 16-year civil war, USAID donated food to prevent people from starving. Today, many children remain chronically malnourished despite adequate food supplies. Compounding the problem, job opportunities are few, especially for rural women with little formal education.



Photo: USAID/Mozambique Suzanne Poland
Luisa Clemente feeds chickens that the Associação Eduardo Mondlane is raising to sell for a profit.

“Before this project, I didn’t have money to take the children to the hospital, to go to school, to buy uniforms and to have food. Today, [my] children’s life is good.”

– Ermelinda DeRosario, mother of five and association member

Results

Today, members of Associação Eduardo Mondlane are on their way to self-sufficiency with \$200 in savings, three times the rural annual per capita income. With their new skills, they maintain an expanding seed bank, grow peanuts for sale, and recently launched a chicken-raising business. The women are in the process of selling a batch of 82 chickens, which will net \$85 in profit and pay for 200 more. They built a chicken coop with hired labor, and paid for vitamins and feed to assure the chickens they market are of good quality. Each woman earns a share of the cooperative’s profits – money they use to pay for school fees and uniforms, and take their children to the hospital when needed. The organization is also looking ahead to new business opportunities raising fish.

Initiative

USAID’s food program has shifted from distributing emergency aid to teaching self-sufficiency. The goal is to give Mozambicans the skills they need to produce more food, increase their household incomes, and reduce malnutrition through healthy diets. In 2004, USAID is investing \$20 million a year in programs that combine agriculture development and nutrition education services to reach more than 200,000 rural families.

Program participants include a group of sixteen women from the Associação Eduardo Mondlane – named for the founder of Mozambique’s independence movement – who are working to improve the lives of families in the Meconta District of Nampula Province in northern Mozambique. The women developed business skills to sell products for a profit as well as learned to grow staples like cassava, a starchy root, in small gardens to feed their families. USAID helped teach them how to improve productivity and grow nutrient-rich crops like sesame, sunflower, and sweet potatoes. The women also learned about healthy diets for children, who often are fed only plain porridge even when other food is available.

