



Small Farmers in Mozambique Build Sturdy Future

Antonio Baera Juliasse lives in the central Mozambique village of Pinda, a rural area near the Malawi border that was virtually cut off from the outside world during a 16-year civil war that ended in 1992. Like many of his neighbors, he had struggled to survive by subsistence farming, growing corn, millet, and sorghum with the help of his wife.

“I wasn’t having much success,” recalls Juliasse, who also turned to fishing the nearby Chire River to support the couple’s six children. He and his neighbors remained poor, although their village sits on a highland plateau in a fertile agricultural area in Zambezia Province.

But Juliasse’s life started to change for the better after USAID-funded agriculture extension agents arrived in Pinda with information and innovative ideas to help poor farmers improve their productivity. The agents introduced new, high-value crops – paprika and vegetables like tomatoes and onions – to an area that had been heavily dependent on corn.

Within a few years, the project – much of it funded through USAID’s Food for Peace program – assisted more than 26,000 farmers in 930 small production groups across the province. As a group member, Juliasse learned how to grow the new, more profitable crops, which is something he never could have done alone. He received hands-on training in good farming techniques, as well as marketing help to assure he found the best outlets for his products.



Photo: USAID/Mozambique Melissa Thompson

Antonio Baera Juliasse, his wife, and four of ten grandchildren outside the couple’s new brick house built with farming profits.

Juliasse is benefiting from a USAID initiative designed to give Mozambicans the skills they need to produce more food, increase their household incomes, and reduce malnutrition through healthy diets. USAID is investing \$20 million a year in programs that combine agriculture extension and nutrition education services to reach more than 200,000 poor rural families.

Today, Juliasse successfully farms one hectare of paprika and vegetables. The area’s paprika production has shot up from virtually nothing in 1998 to more than 30,000 kilograms in 2003, with one company buying all the paprika from Pinda and neighboring villages. Juliasse sells his vegetables in the provincial capital of Quelimane where they bring a high price. With his new skills and knowledge, Juliasse more than doubled his household’s income, from the absolute poverty level of less than \$1 a day to about \$425 a year - 40% above the rural average. He’s even providing jobs for others, employing two local people to work in his fields.

“Before I only farmed maize, sorghum, and millet. I wasn’t having much success. This program is changing my life for the better. I built my new house with bricks, not mud like before.”

- Antonio Baera Juliasse, farmer

This new income has allowed Juliasse to build a three-bedroom brick house with a metal roof, something his wife, Filiana Aranj, never imagined would be possible for their family. “We were not thinking we could afford to live in this kind of house,” she said. Like most rural Mozambicans, the vast majority of Pinda residents have mud-and-stick dwellings with thatch roofs.

And the couple’s brick house is not the only one in Pinda. Their neighbor, Eric Joanquinho, also is putting the finishing touches on his home. A former fisherman, he too learned to grow paprika and vegetables with the help of USAID. “Fishing only supplied money to eat for that day, not to do something else, something visible like this house,” he says with pride.

