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Partnerships for Children
Healthy Children, Bright Futures



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JANUARY 27

INMED Nutrition program overcomes environment, culture to improve children's health in South Africa

'These children do not need to be told to eat their vegetables'

Orange Farm, Johannesburg (January 27, 2009) — More than 10,000 school children in South Africa's Orange Farm settlement on the outskirts of Johannesburg have something they never had before – fresh produce for lunch from gardens at their own schools.

And the community, from government agencies to individual families, has a new outlook on the importance of maintaining healthy diets.

Overcoming environmental challenges as well as a culture that did not emphasize nutrition because of the lack of healthy foods, 11 schools working with INMED South Africa have established and sustained their gardens over the last year, harvesting vegetables for the lunches as well as incorporating participatory nutrition, health and gardening lessons into their curriculum.

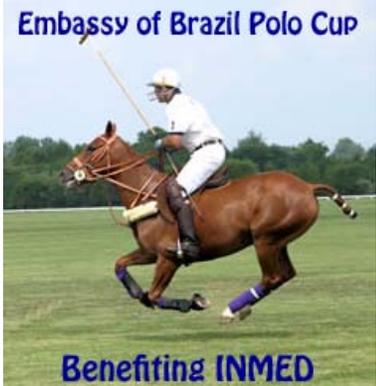


Worker and student in garden

INMED South Africa is the regional program initiative for INMED Partnerships for Children, an international children's welfare organization working in more than 100 countries since 1986 to ensure children's health, education and safety from the prenatal stage and infancy through adolescence and to inspire communities to invest in sustainable positive change for today's generation of children and those to come.



As a result of INMED's Healthy Futures South Africa program, launched in 2006 to improve children's nutritional status by increasing access to produce through school gardens and increasing knowledge and practice of good nutrition and healthy lifestyles, fewer students are missing school because of improved nutrition. At the same time more gardens are being planted in the community in addition to the school gardens,



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Kids receiving veggies from their gardens

said Ethel Zulu, director of INMED's South Africa Programs.

Absenteeism at the schools is down 15 percent because of improved health and because the enhanced school meals act as an incentive for students to be in school, she added.

"Changes in attitudes and behaviors have been especially rewarding to note," Zulu said. "Orange Farm does not have an agricultural heritage or rich soil, and there are more physical and psychological limitations to establishing gardens and incorporating fresh produce into meals. However, we are happy to report that these limitations are being overcome."

On Wednesday, Jan. 28, INMED, the schools and supporters celebrated the program's success to recognize the schools and to discuss plans for sustaining the program at the schools. The program is supported by the Monsanto Fund, with additional local support from the Departments of Health, Education and Agriculture and local farmers.



Kids in line for school feeding

Awards were presented to the schools by Miss Earth South Africa, Matapa Maila. The celebration began at noon at the Orange Farm Multipurpose Center, 15825 ext. 4, Orange Farm, 1841, Gauteng Drive.

"The Monsanto Fund is pleased to support a program that not only helps provide nutritionally enhanced foods to children, but that also shares important lessons in nutrition and food production," said Deborah Patterson, president, Monsanto Fund. "By helping these children and their families understand how food is produced, they will have a brighter, healthier future."



Garden with Seedling Shelter

INMED organizers are now tracking benchmarks among students to measure the program's impact on their health while also working with the schools and the community to sustain the gardens on their own in collaboration with the program's supporters," said INMED President and CEO Linda Pfeiffer. One plan for sustainability includes selling the produce to raise capital for garden maintenance and enhancements.

"Most moving to me," Pfeiffer said, "is how so many have embraced this program in such a short time. Of course, watching children eagerly eat all of their vegetables – no one needs to be coerced to clean their plates – clearly has influenced the cultural and generational change we are now witnessing in Orange Farm and elsewhere through programs such as Healthy Futures."

About INMED Partnerships for Children - Since 1986, INMED Partnerships for Children (www.inmed.org), an international non-profit humanitarian development organization, has worked in more than 100 countries to fulfill a wide range of health, nutrition, education, violence prevention and community development projects that create a continuum of care for children from the prenatal period through adulthood by empowering families and communities to support the development of healthy, educated children for increased opportunities for the future.

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