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Healthy Children, Bright Futures



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JULY 13

INMED Brings Healthy Futures to Children of South Africa

Monsanto Fund grant to expand nutrition program to all primary schools in Johannesburg township.

Orange Farm, Johannesburg (July 13, 2009) — Although preparing to turn over its nutrition program to nearly a dozen schools in this impoverished township just outside of Johannesburg, where malnutrition plagues thousands of children, INMED's work here is far from done.

In fact, for some schools, thanks to a renewed commitment from the Monsanto Fund, which will extend its support of INMED's programs in South Africa over five years, the work is just beginning.

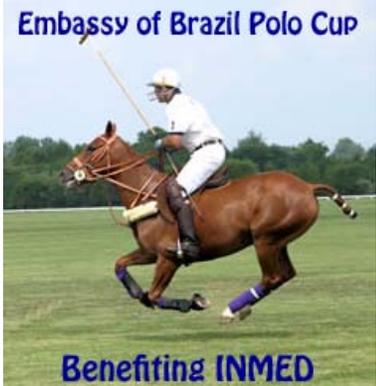
Since 2006, INMED Partnerships for Children has worked with 11 schools to reduce hunger among 10,600 children by increasing the availability of nutritious produce through school gardens and delivering nutrition education for teachers, school food workers and families of school-age children. Funding for this first phase of the program was \$600,000.

While those schools and their community members and local governments are preparing to take ownership of INMED's Healthy Futures South Africa program, a new, two-year \$406,000 grant from the Monsanto Fund will allow INMED to branch out the program to 15 more schools in Orange Farm — these in even more depressed areas of the township — and bring the total number of those reached either directly or indirectly through the entire program to roughly 150,000 people, or 40 percent of the Orange Farm population, including students, their families, teachers and community leaders, businesses and residents. With the expansion, the program will now be in all primary schools in the township.

"The new Monsanto Fund support is critical to our goal of bringing the community together for the sake of their children's future," said Linda Pfeiffer, INMED's president and CEO. "The program is really a system that the community can adopt and even improve upon as needed to make sure their children are healthy and educated so that they, one day, will build upon that system."

"It's happening right before our eyes and it's incredible to witness."

She added that by establishing strong links with local partners through the program, a foundation has



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been set to maintain the school gardens and nutrition curriculum over the long term. Local governments are among those committed partners, critical for the program's sustainability. The program has also engaged parents to be more active in their schools to ensure healthy foods for their children, such as volunteering to maintain the gardens.

"The Monsanto Fund is pleased to continue supporting the INMED led Healthy Futures program after witnessing the great accomplishments so far amongst school children in participating schools at Orange Farm," said Kobus Lindeque, managing director for the Monsanto Fund's South Africa region. "At the Monsanto Fund, our goal is to support communities to improve their health and nutrition, and whenever possible improve their incomes, through productive farming. When communities know more and can grow more, and especially when the major beneficiaries are children, it is a real blessing. This project falls directly in line with Monsanto's commitment to sustainability that is anchored on helping people grow more, conserve more and improve their lives. Monsanto is pleased to continue collaborating with INMED and other local collaborators to spread the benefits of this exciting project to other schools in the Orange Farm community."

Many students, most of them coming from homes mired in poverty, arrive at school hungry. On most days, their only substantial meal is what they receive through a government sponsored school food program that often failed to meet its own nutrition mandates.

As part of the Healthy Futures program, INMED took height and weight measurements late last year of 153 six- and seven-year-olds to determine whether they were at healthy weights, based on Body Mass Index. The results, said Ethel Zulu, director of INMED's South Africa programs, found 14 percent of the children measured were underweight.

Malnutrition, even in mild cases, she added, weakens children's defenses against such preventable and treatable diseases as diarrhea, measles and pneumonia continue to claim one out of every four children under the age of five in South Africa.

There are other ramifications of poor health among children, such as absenteeism and poor school performance. It's little wonder, Zulu said, that unemployment in the region is an "alarming" 70 percent while more than one-third of households survive on no income whatsoever.

"Without health in their lives, children are not going to perform well in school and many won't even finish school. Obviously, the outlook for them to find work is bleak. Our goal is to make sure children are healthy and have a good education so that when they become adults they can contribute to making their communities stronger for their own children," Zulu said.

Healthy Futures, Pfeiffer said, addresses hunger and nutrition by providing fresh fruits and vegetables from school gardens to supplement and increase the nutritional value of school meals. In addition, the schools adopted the program's nutrition curriculum, educators and food workers were trained to maintain the gardens, and community support, such as a local nursery that donates seedlings and worms to the gardens, has enabled the program to flourish.

Pfeiffer observed that many parents sought to become involved in the program, leading to a new component with the second round of funding to train 3,000 families on establishing and maintaining their own household gardens.

By providing fresh fruits and vegetables to supplement and increase the nutritional value of the school meal and by introducing home gardens as a means to improve nutrition and reduce food insecurity while also generating household income, Healthy Futures addresses factors that have a critical impact on the long-term health, nutritional status and self-sufficiency of local children and families, she added.

"Most importantly, families now see that there are possibilities to transform Orange Farm into greener pastures of hope for their children so that the next generation of children might never know that same poverty except through history," Pfeiffer said.



about a day ago



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About The Monsanto Fund - The Monsanto Fund is the philanthropic arm of the Monsanto Company. Incorporated in 1964, the Fund's primary objective is to improve the lives of people by bridging the gap between their needs and their resources. The Monsanto Fund is focused on grant-making in four main areas: nutritional improvement through agriculture; science education, primarily on professional development for teachers; healthy environment, which includes conservation, protection of biodiversity, clean water and restoration of wildlife habitat; and improving the quality of life in communities where Monsanto employees live and work. Visit the Monsanto Fund at <http://www.monsantofund.org/asp/welcome.asp>.

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