Smart Investments in Global Food Security: A Recipe for Alleviating Chronic Malnutrition in Mozambique
Findings from the CARE Chefs’ Learning Tour to Mozambique
August 16-22, 2015

On this Learning Tour to Mozambique, four influential chefs traveled with CARE to Mozambique to see firsthand how U.S. investments are helping to empower women and smallholder farmers and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. The chefs had the opportunity to see how CARE is working to address food and nutrition security and promote innovative farming and fishing techniques in some of the most vulnerable communities.

Through visits to CARE’s programs, the chefs learned how access to healthy and nutritious foods, or lack thereof, can impact the health and well-being of families and children. The trip highlighted the need for U.S. food and nutrition security programs to adopt a comprehensive approach that empowers the world’s poorest women and their families to realize their rights to nutritious food and protect the planet’s resources for today and years to come.

The next morning, the delegates traveled to Nampula in northern Mozambique, where they had the opportunity to learn more about the country context by experiencing traditional Mozambican cuisine and participating in conversations with local CARE staff and technical experts about the challenges many parents face in providing food for their families.

Days 1-2: Setting the Scene in Mozambique
On the first day of the Learning Tour, the delegation arrived in Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique, where they had the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about CARE’s approach to long-term food and nutrition security, the organization’s work around empowering women and girls globally and the important role that policy plays in bringing long-term solutions.

Participants:

Michelle Carter
Managing Deputy Regional Director for Southern Africa/Country Director for South Africa
CARE

Cat Cora
Owner of Ocean by Cat Cora, Cat Cora’s Kitchen and Cat Cora’s Gourmet Market
Santa Barbara, CA

Carla Hall
Co-host on The Chew and owner of Carla Hall Petite Cookies
Washington, DC/New York, NY

Antonia Lofaso
Owner of Scopa Italian Roots and Black Market Liquor Bar
Los Angeles, CA

Spike Mendelsohn
Owner of Good Stuff Eatery; We, the Pizza and Béarnaise
Washington, DC

Dan Mullins
Director of Research, Learning and Advocacy, Food and Nutrition Security Unit
CARE

Carla Hall buys spices and local produce from a market in Nampula and learns about some of the staple food items most common in Mozambican culture, such as cassava, maize and prawns.
The delegates began their day in Nampula with a visit to a local food and spice market to learn more about Mozambican cuisine and to see the various foods that families are eating to improve their diet diversity and nutrition. The chefs shopped for foods such as cassava, maize and prawns, all of which are staple foods that can be found on the dinner tables of many Mozambican households.

Afterward, the group had a chance to step into the kitchen of a local restaurant with a small, well-kept cooking space to prepare a meal alongside Mozambican chefs using the local ingredients purchased at the food and spice market. The utensils used by the chefs in the local restaurant were different from those available to cooks in the U.S. However, this restaurant was very significant, in that it was led by female head chef, Suniza Gafar, a role not typically held by women in Mozambique. While the food was being prepared, the delegates talked with the local chefs and shared their perspectives on the challenges and successes in combating food insecurity in Mozambique.

Day 3: Fishing for Food Security

On the third day of the Learning Tour, the delegation traveled to Angoche located along Mozambique’s northern coast to visit an integrated fisheries and agriculture conservation program, Primeiras e Segundas, which is supported by CARE and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). This program was named after the Primeiras e Segundas Archipelago, which covers 4,020 square miles of marine and coastal areas across the Nampula and Zambezia provinces in northern Mozambique. Today, the Primeiras e Segundas Environmental Protection Area (PSEPA) is the second-largest coastal marine reserve in Africa. This area of environmental protection is rich in biologically diverse marine life, which includes deep underwater canyons, large sea grass beds and some of the most robust coral communities in Africa. The area is also home to approximately 300,000 people, more than half of whom live in poverty and suffer from chronic malnutrition. This CARE-WWF initiative works with local fishermen to conserve and improve the fragile ecosystem of the protected area.

The delegation traveled by boat to Omuive, one of the many island communities in the estuary off the coast of Angoche, where they met with community members to discuss the steps they are taking to protect natural resources in the area. Before reaching the community, the chefs joined several fishermen in their wooden boat to discuss how natural resource management is increasing their daily catches.

Alima Assane and other members of the Community Based Natural Resources Management Committee, which was established with the help of CARE and WWF, met the delegation as their boat docked and took them on a tour of the mangroves. The mangroves play an important role in the estuary by protecting the communities from natural disasters and providing an ecosystem for crabs, fish and sea snails. Alima works in her community to raise awareness of the importance of protecting mangroves and teaches others about selective cutting of mangroves, which is to cut off the branches instead of the whole tree for firewood.
Alima’s story highlighted just how important natural resource management is to women in the community. Alima’s husband left to find work in Beira, a city in central Mozambique, and now she singlehandedly provides food for her family. It is taboo for a woman to fish from a boat, therefore Alima and her five children have to rely on the sea snails and the occasional crab she catches in the mangroves. A typical meal at her house consists of cassava and sea snails with peanut sauce, but often she has to rely on the generosity of her neighbors for fish and other foods. As Alima stressed to the delegation, her family’s ability to access food is directly linked to the health of the mangroves.

The chefs met with Alima and Azaliha Amissee, another woman in the Community Based Natural Resource Management Committee. Together, they cooked a feast of chicken curry, cassava and coconut rice – a meal that the community typically only eats once or twice a year.

“With healthy mangroves, there are more crabs and sea snails that decrease hunger.”
— AZALIHA AMISSEE

Day 4: A Day in the Life of a Farmer

The next day, the delegation returned to the Primeiras e Segundas program site in Angoche to join the Congressional Learning Tour delegation, which included three U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee staffers, along with Administrator Phil Karsting of the Foreign Agricultural Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and technical expert Arlene Mitchell, executive director of the Global Child Nutrition Foundation. The group visited a farmer field school, which teaches conservation agriculture methods to local populations to improve food and livelihood security. This school is designed to provide additional options to fishermen as well, so that they do not have to rely so heavily on fishing as a source of food for their families. By integrating the innovative farming techniques learned from the farmer field school – such as increasing seed and crop varieties, which helps prevent soil degradation – these smallholder farmers have been able to produce healthier harvests and greater crop yields.

Cecilia Abilio, president of one of the farmer field school groups, took the chefs on a tour of her field to show how she is implementing new techniques including minimum tillage, mulching and intercropping. She has two horticulture fields with cabbage, onions, tomatoes, peppers, corn and lettuce. Cecilia usually gets enough cassava and peanuts for her family’s consumption, selling whatever is left over in order to get money for school supplies for her two sons.

“When a family doesn’t have enough food, the children lose their schooling years and women have to suffer at home, knowing that there’s not enough food.”
— CECILIA ABILIO

Chef Antonia Lofaso talks with Cecilia, a mother of two and participant in the CARE-WWF Farmer Field School program who talks about the impact the school’s conservation agriculture techniques have had on her crop production and her family’s nutrition.
As the delegation learned, nearly 85 percent of the world’s farms are tended to by smallholder farmers. However, small-scale food producers often struggle to grow, catch or buy enough nutritious food due to a variety of factors, including poor quality soil, small plots of land, limited access to financial services, depleted fish stocks, water scarcity and limited diversity in foods. For women, these challenges are even greater. When food is scarce, they are often the last to eat. Despite the critical role they play in agriculture and in their families’ and communities’ food and nutrition security, women do not have equal access as men to resources like land, credit and other resources that men easily access. If they did, research shows the number of hungry people around the world could be reduced by 100-150 million.

After the farmer field school site visit, the chefs returned to Nampula with the congressional delegation to reflect over dinner on what they saw that day at the Primeiras e Segundas program. In a conversation facilitated by Michelle Carter, CARE’s managing deputy regional director and country director, the group talked about what the United States’ role should be in continuing to improve long-term food and nutrition security in the region, as well as promoting natural resource management. The delegates also discussed some of the mechanisms for improving food and nutrition security with the U.S. Government and with global partners, and the role they each can play in advocating to prevent hunger after the Learning Tour.

Day 5: Taking Action Back Home

On the final day of the Learning Tour, the chefs came together to reflect on the programs and the sites they visited during the trip before returning home. The group discussed the chef delegation’s role in ensuring that the U.S. Government adopts food and nutrition security programs that focus on working to empower women and smallholder farmers and to leverage natural resource management practices.

Conclusion

With more than 795 million people around the world with not enough food to eat and with no sustainable food and nutrition security, programs like the ones the delegation visited in Mozambique are critical in addressing global hunger. As the chefs saw in Mozambique, rural women play a significant role in producing food and providing for their families’ health and nutrition. Yet, women often lack equal access to land, credit and other resources that men easily access. Furthermore, they are not always part of community or even household decision-making and they often have little control over how resources are spent. For this reason, U.S. investments in women farmers are also essential to improving the health and well-being of families and communities around the world.

Policy Recommendations

Support Smart Foreign Assistance

U.S. foreign assistance is critical to building a stable and secure world. U.S.-funded programs produce real change in the lives of children and families living in extreme poverty and save lives during crises. By emphasizing self-reliance and sustainability, U.S. foreign assistance helps people help themselves. One of the most important things the U.S. can do to fight global poverty is devote sufficient resources to these programs and ensure the U.S. is coordinated and effective in its response. The International Affairs budget is just 1 percent of the total federal budget, and yet it helps to feed millions, reduce mortality for women and children, and enables the U.S. to respond to humanitarian crises like the conflict in Syria or the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. While we recognize the significance of this difficult budget climate, CARE advocates for the U.S. to leverage its resources, coordinate its response, and strengthen its support for the International Affairs budget and programming.
Support Long-Term Food Security
CARE advocates for U.S. food and nutrition security programs to adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses all aspects of hunger and malnutrition. Food-insecure households often struggle to grow or buy enough nutritious food because of poor soil quality, small plots of land, water scarcity, and/or low incomes. Often, they have no access to a variety of nutritious food and face increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. Women are particularly constrained, given their unequal access to financial information and economic resources. Food and nutrition security programs must enable vulnerable families to increase their agricultural productivity and incomes, protect natural resources, increase their resilience and diversify their livelihoods. Programs also must integrate nutrition. CARE advocates for support of bipartisan legislation, such as the Global Food Security Act (H.R. 1567/S. 1525) that calls for a comprehensive food and nutrition security strategy, increased program effectiveness and coordination among existing programs, and sustainability that ensures continuity of these programs.

We are deeply grateful to the many people who generously gave of their time to make this visit to Mozambique a success. CARE specifically thanks the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its generous financial support of the Learning Tours.

If you are interested in learning more about CARE’s Learning Tours program, please contact:

CARE Learning Tours
1825 I Street, NW, Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20006

202-595-2800
CARELearningTours@care.org
www.care.org/learningtours

twitter.com/care

Facebook.com/CAREfans

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