

## Greenhouse profits feed children and keep them in school

NAIROBI, Kenya — From outside its wrought iron gate, the Macheo Children's Center looks like any other farm. But once inside, you will find swing sets and lots of happy children.

The Macheo Center, a school and refuge for orphans from local slums, generates profits from agriculture and uses the money to feed students and keep them in school.

The Macheo Center started with just a small vegetable garden, but its managers wanted to find a way to feed the center's 55 residents. Fintrac's Kenya Horticultural Development Program helped them through technical assistance in horticulture and helped them build a greenhouse. Fintrac Senior Agronomist Lydia Njuguna taught the center about drip irrigation, managing pests and new varieties. Today the center manages seven commercial greenhouses, generating enough profit to feed the orphanage's residents and pay school fees for thousands of children from local slums.

Fintrac continues to provide training to the Macheo Center, focusing on crop and plantlet production. Using Fintrac's package of improved agricultural practices, each of the Macheo Center's greenhouses yield 94 crates of tomatoes per year. At current market prices, this amounts to \$2,800 per greenhouse per year, which means they will make more than \$19,000 on tomatoes alone. The center also grows peppers and cucumbers. They re-invest all profits back into the orphanage.

"We are still learning, but we've come a long way," said Marmix Huis in't Veld, director of the Macheo Center.

In Macheo's early years, the staff interviewed families from nearby slums and found that the majority could not afford tuition, lunches or uniforms. With income from agriculture, the center has been able to fund the cost of schooling for 2,500 children who would have otherwise been unable to attend school.

Fintrac's Njuguna stops by the Macheo Children's Center not just during her regular technical assistance visits but in her free time as well.

"I love coming here because we are not just touching one person, but many, many little souls," Njuguna said.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Macheo Children's Center Director Marmix Huis in't Veld and his students show off tomatoes from the school's greenhouse.



Greenhouses at the Macheo Children's Center are used to feed orphans and generate income to pay school fees.

Fintrac is working in Central, Coast, Eastern Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western provinces to increase incomes through smallholder production and employment in the horticulture industry. The program is working with more than 15,000 members of 500 smallholder groups in conjunction with 52 private and public sector alliance partners.