

MOZAMBIQUE

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN: PROJECTS FROM THE FIELD

The MDG1c programme: building resilience for better diets in Mozambique

Malnutrition in Mozambique

Mozambique's strong economic performance has not been accompanied by a significant reduction in malnutrition. At 43%, the national prevalence of child stunting remains very high¹. With more than 2 million stunted children, Mozambique is off-track to meet global nutrition targets on stunting, and children from the poorest households are disproportionately affected. At the same time anaemia affects almost 7 out of 10 children and more than half of women, while overweight and obesity is increasing across all groups. The causes of malnutrition are multi-faceted and include poor diets, inadequate childcare, inability to access a quality education and health services, unsafe water and sanitation, gender inequalities and persistent multi-dimensional poverty. Malnutrition – in all its forms – comes with unacceptably high, yet preventable, human, social and economic costs. Mozambique loses over 10.9% GDP each year to child stunting alone, equivalent to USD 1.6 billion².

Accelerate progress towards MDG1c in Mozambique (2013-2019)

This EUR 87 million³ programme was funded under the EU MDG1c initiative to reduce hunger and undernutrition in areas with high agricultural potential but poor nutrition⁴. Adopting a holistic approach, the programme's aims included improving agricultural and fisheries production to increase access to food and improving the nutrition status of vulnerable groups and low income households, with a focus on women and young children. Interventions included strengthening value chains in the agricultural and fisheries sectors, farmer field schools, e-vouchers, home gardens, food fortification, strengthening market information systems and nutrition education (including social behaviour change).

Covering six ministries, the action was designed to reinforce existing national programmes and implementation brought together three UN agencies: IFAD, FAO and WFP. Crucially, programme coordination and monitoring were in the hands of the government's technical secretariat for food and nutrition security (SETSAN). As identified by a 2015 midterm review, achieving a multi-sectoral approach to address nutrition at scale can be challenging. Key lessons learned have included the importance of adapting the programme to local contexts, strengthening nutrition governance and developing nutrition-related capacities of service providers at every level.

Tangible results in the lives of women and children

An evaluation of the MDG1c programme confirmed a measurable improvement in the food security, diet and nutritional status of children as compared to control groups who did not benefit from the programme⁵. In particular, the share of food-insecure households was halved, thereby increasing resilience to shocks; the diversity of children's diets improved, as did the diets of women and adolescent girls⁶, and the prevalence of child stunting fell by 5 percentage points at district level. A particularly important finding was that the gains in food and nutrition security were much higher for households reached by the greatest range of interventions.



Outcomes ⁷	2013	2018
Stunting	45%	40%
Food insecurity	31%	16%
Coping strategy index	45%	20%
Exclusive breastfeeding	27%	54%
Children's diet	30%	35%

Realising human potential

Malnutrition on the scale found in Mozambique has long term negative consequences in terms of poor health, low levels of child development and reduced productivity leading to lower incomes. Social and economic inequalities between men and women can exacerbate poor nutrition while good nutrition and gender equality are mutually reinforcing. The programme set out to address gender inequalities with a number of interventions (such as farmer field schools for women and men, mothers' care groups, and women's savings groups) to ensure positive effects on women's empowerment. One women's savings group in Barue (Beira corridor) saw women start up successful businesses with the additional income allowing families to improve or build a new house or afford a better education for their children. As a result, the programme has contributed directly to breaking the cycle of deprivation connected to maternal disadvantage and malnutrition.

Tackling climate and environmental challenges

Mozambique is one of the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change and in recent years has faced repeated emergencies. The severe El Niño drought in 2016, followed by two cyclones in 2019, caused widespread damage to already vulnerable livelihoods and further deterioration of food insecurity. During the humanitarian and early recovery response period, e-vouchers developed and institutionalised by the MDG1c programme worked effectively to distribute assets to affected populations. Communities were able to become more resilient by having better knowledge on how to prevent disease, improved crop production during the lean season and periods of crisis, and the building of community assets such as irrigation schemes, water harvesting systems and roads.

- 1 Mozambique DHS 2011; SETSAN Baseline Study 2013.
- 2 The Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) Mozambique study 2017.
- 3 EU support EUR 77.3 million including EUR 10 million top-up following El Niño emergency in 2016.
- 4 The programme's geographical focus is on the Beira and Nacala corridors (76 districts in 10 provinces).
- 5 SETSAN (2018) Endline Study (district level) and Impact Evaluation (community level) of MDG1c programme in Mozambique. Note: limitations of the Endline Study do not allow to attribute impact only to MDG1c while there is a greater level of confidence with the Impact Evaluation.
- 6 Evaluation of IFAD/PROMER agricultural marketing interventions showed the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women indicator improved both for women (from 28% to 40%) and adolescent girls (from 55% to 68%) between 2017 and 2018.
- 7 Internationally recognised indicators used: for food insecurity, the Food Consumption Score; for coping strategy index, the Reduced Coping Strategy Index; for children's diet, the Minimum Dietary Diversity.

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Photo: Children involved in the project Sesame and Honey Mozambique. © EU. Credit: Ellie Tomassi

