



Gender Transformative and Nutrition-sensitive (GTNS) Stunting Prevention Project in Chemba District, Mozambique

WFP Mozambique's Gender Transformative and Nutrition-sensitive (GTNS) stunting prevention project in Chemba district, Sofala province is implemented with the generous contribution by the Austria Development Agency (ADA). The project consists of a complementary package of services, including training and tools for climate resilient agriculture; training and technology to reduce post-harvest loss (PHL); food assistance for assets (FFA); and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) to promote key messages on nutrition, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and positive gender relationships.

This innovative programme in Mulima locality of Chemba district aims to reduce stunting by focusing on women's empowerment as a way to ensure children eat a nutritious diet. Over three years, it will reach 1,500 households (7,500 people) which contain adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women (PLW), children under 2 and women with a obstetric fistula. Activities are integrated across several WFP Mozambique units – Nutrition and HIV, Resilience and Climate, Cash Based Transfer (CBT) and Supply Chain (retail), Smallholder Farmer Support and Gender.

LOCAL CONTEXT

In Mozambique, one out of two children under-five are stunted and 28% of children under six months are already stunted. High stunting prevalence before complementary feeding is supposed to have begun is indicative of poor maternal nutrition status before, during and immediately following pregnancy, including young age (adolescent pregnancy) as well as poor breastfeeding practices.

Chemba district, Sofala province is located in the central area of Mozambique with a total population of nearly 90,000 people (47% men and 53% women). The average household size is five people per household and the main source of livelihood is

rain-fed agriculture. Agricultural production is insufficient (affected by the semi-arid climate and low precipitation) yet a large segment of the population relies on their own production during four to five months of the year.

Nutrition surveys found that the stunting and wasting rates for children under-five in Sofala are 41.2% and 7%, respectively.¹



Two female Community Health Workers (CHWs) travelling to a cooking demonstration
Photo credits: WFP Mozambique/Nilda Lima

When food insecurity is high it is common for households to employ negative coping strategies, such as reducing the number of meals per day or the diversity of foods eaten, and for early marriages and gender-based violence to increase. While Mozambique is a signatory to all regional and international policy frameworks aimed at promoting equal rights for women and men, women and girls also face restrictive gender norms and widespread gender-based violence (GBV). One out of two girls are married and 40% give birth to their first child before the age of 18.

Chemba also has weak infrastructure with poor road networks and an inadequate health system that cannot provide appropriate coverage to meet health needs. Long distances to health facilities and inadequate drug supply are common problems.

¹ Inquerito ao orçamento familiar (IOF) 2015/2015, INE

Achieving proper nutrition takes an integrated approach:

- **Food diversification:** promoting improved agricultural practices and diverse/balanced diets to improve nutrition
- **Food fortification:** Increased demand of fortified foods by raising awareness of the nutritional benefits and distributing fortified commodities to households
- **Food processing:** Improving food storage and preservation techniques through technologies and CHW-led demonstrations
- **Cooking demonstrations:** Linking all 3 components to provide small groups of men and women with nutritious recipes using PHL food processing techniques on foods resilience unit is training households

The project was designed using a gender and nutrition lens, promoting and reinforcing these elements throughout the components. WFP is partnering with three NGO's and three local government agencies to implement three cross-cutting components: resilience, PHL and SBCC.

REDUCING POST-HARVEST LOSS

PHL contributes to food insecurity throughout Mozambique, with farmers losing more than 30% of crops to pests and mould. This has a significant effect on nutrition, health and household security. In particular, aflatoxins – a poisonous substance caused by a fungus – are regularly found in improperly stored staple foods in Mozambique. One effect of aflatoxins is to inhibit the absorption of vitamins and minerals, heightening the risk of stunting in children. The promotion of adequate and safe storage practices could therefore have a substantial impact on the nutritional status of Mozambicans.

The project is providing training on PHL to female and male small holder farmers, as well as solar dryers and hermetic bags, and demand generation for PHL technologies.

GENDER- AND NUTRITION-SENSITIVE ASSETS

The assets in the FFA component have been designed to significantly reduce a woman's time on unpaid labour. Women and girls spend up to three hours a day collecting water, and between six to ten hours a week collecting firewood. Time saving assets, such as fuel-efficient stoves and water catchment systems, reduce the risk of girls being taken out of school, and give women more time for income generating activities and childcare. Nutrition-sensitive assets include vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, latrines and handwashing stations.

The project aims to support the health and well being of mothers through improving their diets; this will also have a positive effect on the nutritional status of their infants.

ADDING EGGS TO THE FOOD BASKET

The food basket provided in the FFA is made up of fortified maize meal, fortified vegetable oil, beans, iodised salt and eggs. In 2018, WFP carried out a Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis in Mozambique, to better understand the barriers to adequate nutrient intake. The FNG focused primarily on interventions for stunting reduction during the first 1,000 days of life – from conception to a child's 2nd birthday. It found that if a 6–23 month old child ate an egg every day, the cost of providing them a nutritious diet would be reduced by 25%.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION

The SBCC strategy is a prototype, designed specifically to support stunting prevention and increase women's empowerment. Poor maternal nutrition, limited female decision making, high gender-based violence and inadequate access to SRH services among the drivers of stunting.

SBCC consists of a three-pronged approach: nutrition, SRH and gender. Messaging around nutrition includes Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), such as optimum breastfeeding practices; maternal health and nutrition; and nutrition-sensitive topics, such as sanitation & hygiene and malaria prevention. Mobile brigades teach mothers to look after their own SRH (particularly family planning and pregnancy) and support referral to health services. Gender dialogue clubs provide safe spaces for couples to discuss sensitive issues such as gender norms and roles, gender-based violence, family planning and early marriage.

The project has also trained community radio journalists to support behaviour change around nutrition, SRH and gender. These journalists have developed interactive radio show for various audiences, in which different stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries, traditional and religious leaders) tell success stories. Community debates and success stories are also broadcast.

COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are leading demonstrations of nutritious recipes using locally available foods following the balanced diet formula: protein + fruit/vegetables + tubers + a little bit of fats (e.g. oil). These sessions are designed to raise awareness and prompt discussion on the wide range of possible nutritious meals within the local context.

Each cooking demonstration is preceded by a food processing session where CHWs teach households how to preserve food using a solar dryer or other conservation techniques. This food (e.g. dried leaves or preserved eggs) is used as one of the ingredients in the demonstrated recipe. All cooking demonstrations and food processing sessions highlight at least one ingredient that is being introduced in the resilience component (e.g. orange fleshed sweet potatoes).



A mom and her young child tasting an enriched porridge at a cooking pre-testing demonstration
Photo credits: WFP Mozambique/Nilda Lima

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