



## A Call to Action

### Urgent Scale-up of Coordinated Nutrition Action Needed in Mozambique

*December 2022*

This is a Call to Action for the Government of Mozambique, donors, embassies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and local organizations to urgently support and scale-up humanitarian nutrition action and financing in Mozambique.

The Nutrition Cluster is requesting US\$29 million to scale up lifesaving nutrition actions for 400,000 children at risk of and affected with acute malnutrition in conflict and climate shock settings.

This call to action is in line with the national nutrition strategy (ESAN III) and the humanitarian needs identified in the 2023 Nutrition Cluster Humanitarian Response Plan.

## The Current Context

*The nutrition situation in Mozambique is extremely fragile due to compounded vulnerabilities in the country. These vulnerabilities include ongoing conflict in the north, climate shocks (cyclones and tropical storms in the centre and north and drought in the south), residual impacts of COVID-19, and the impact of global food prices and essential nutrition commodities due in part to the war in Ukraine. As a result, nutrition related goods and supplements are now 18-20 percent more expensive, furthering the pervasive poverty felt in the country.*

Mozambique is a food-deficit country, ranked 103rd out of 107 on the 2020 Global Hunger Index<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the conflict in the north has affected an estimated 1.5 million people, – displacing 1 million people in Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa provinces, with 55 percent being children<sup>2</sup>. From October 2022 to January 2023, the food insecurity situation in approximately 36 percent of households will likely reach critical levels (IPC Phase 3), as the lean season started in November 2022, heightening existing vulnerabilities<sup>3</sup>. Nearly 1.45 million people are currently facing high levels of acute food insecurity, of which 932,000 are in Cabo Delgado province alone.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the dire circumstances across the conflict and cyclone-affected districts in northern Mozambique, both displaced people and host families have adopted harmful coping mechanisms, including: reducing the amount and frequency of meals and delaying the introduction of complementary foods to small children (OCHA, HNO 2022). These harmful coping mechanisms, combined with limited access to quality basic services, are resulting in increased undernutrition levels and vulnerability to common childhood diseases, such as pneumonia, diarrhoea diseases, malaria and measles.

Moreover, funding for the humanitarian response in Mozambique has been insufficient to cover the most critical humanitarian needs, and the financial resources outlook and forecast are worrisome. In April 2022, the Food Security Cluster was forced to halve the amount of food aid delivered to families, to less than 40 percent of the minimum daily caloric needs, further exacerbating the population's vulnerability to undernutrition.

The nutrition sector is often poorly funded, with a 67 percent funding gap<sup>1</sup> in 2022, resulting in partners being unable to meet the critical lifesaving needs of the most vulnerable populations.

High rates of undernutrition continue to persist in Mozambique, with 38 percent of children under five years being stunted<sup>5</sup>, higher than the average for the African region (29 percent) and among the highest in the world. In addition, Mozambique is among the top 10 East and South African

<sup>1</sup> 2020 Global Hunger Index. [www.globalhungerindex.org](http://www.globalhungerindex.org).

<sup>2</sup> Mozambique | DTM - Displacement Tracking Matrix. <https://www.dtm.iom.int/mozambique>

<sup>3</sup> FEWS NET. Key message update: Attacks in northern Mozambique continue to displace households as the rainy season nears. <https://fews.net/southern-africa/mozambique>

<sup>4</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Mozambique: Acute Food Insecurity Situation November 2021-March 2022 and Projection for April - September 2022. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/resources/resources-details/en/c/1155369>

<sup>5</sup> INE. Inquerito sobre o Orçamento Familiar 2019-2020.

countries with the highest caseloads of children affected by acute malnutrition<sup>6</sup>. Similar to food insecurity trends, further deterioration of nutrition conditions in northern Mozambique is expected with a projected 98,000 children under five years old (40,000 with severe acute malnutrition and 58,000 with moderate acute malnutrition) and about 7,900 pregnant and breastfeeding women in need of lifesaving treatment for acute malnutrition in 8 out of 17 districts of Cabo Delgado, from April 2022 to March 2023 (SMART Cabo Delgado, 2022).

In 2023, over 820,000 children nationwide will need lifesaving treatment for acute malnutrition – 250,000 with severe acute malnutrition and 570,000 with moderate acute malnutrition<sup>5</sup>.

## The Humanitarian Response

Despite the dire situation and high level of need, the coverage of nutrition interventions by nutrition actors remains low; well below the expected 50 percent as recommended by [Sphere standards](#). To date, less than 20 percent<sup>7</sup> of people in need of both severe and moderate acute malnutrition treatment have been reached due to limited access to, and lack of well-functioning health facilities, coupled with frequent stock outs of therapeutic nutrition supplies. **Such low coverage leaves more than 660,000 children<sup>8</sup> with moderate and severe wasting without access to quality care, increasing their risk of dying.**



*Zaina, in her twenties, is illiterate but she knows how to write her name. She has six children, including 9-month-old twins Joaquim and Joaquina. Their father abandoned them, and Zaina faces serious difficulties in providing for all her children. Without any fixed income and relying on the generosity of neighbours, her family has roughly one meal a day.*

*Zaina was referred to the Paquitequete health center in Cabo Delgado, after both children were diagnosed with acute malnutrition. Now, after four months of treatment, health workers informed Zaina that her twins are getting better. "They play like other kids now", says Zaina.*

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<sup>6</sup> 2021 Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (UNICEF-WHO-WB). <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-05-2021-the-unicef-who-wb-joint-child-malnutrition-estimates-group-released-new-data-for-2021>

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Health. SIS-MA 2022.

<sup>8</sup> SMART nutrition survey 2022 – Cabo Delgado.

## The Call to Action

### ⇒ **The Government of Mozambique and humanitarian actors must prioritize the nutrition response to minimize undernutrition related deaths**

Urgent action is needed from all actors to scale up high-impact interventions to prevent and treat undernutrition, by supporting and funding: 1) vitamin A and micronutrients supplementation and adequate infant and young child feeding and care practices combined with provision of supplementary feeding; 2) expansion of management of severe and moderate acute malnutrition among children under age five, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people living with disabilities; and 3) stronger nutrition linkages to actions implemented by health, food security, WASH and social protection programmes. Hard-to-reach areas should be prioritized, considering alternative approaches as needed, ensuring adequate stock levels, storage, and delivery of essential nutrition commodities.

### ⇒ **The Government of Mozambique and humanitarian actors to adopt new, innovative, and more efficient approaches to prevent and treat acute malnutrition**

In exceptional circumstances, where the standard protocol is difficult to implement and with the aim to improve coverage through early detection and treatment, the Ministry of Health, as the provider of treatment services for acute malnutrition in Mozambique, is advised to adopt simplified protocols and approaches for the early identification and treatment of acute malnutrition. Simultaneously, it is critical to invest in programmes that improve dietary intake and access to basic services for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and children under two years while mainstreaming gender and social inclusion. Donors need to support and fund innovative and integrated approaches to enhance coverage of the nutrition actions, noting the below 20 per cent coverage of current implementation modalities.

### ⇒ **Inter-sector stakeholders must strengthen multisectoral interventions for collective and enhanced response**

Immediate access to multisectoral services such as food and livelihoods, health, nutrition, safe water, sanitation and hygiene, is critical to prevent widespread undernutrition, starvation, illness and death. No sector or intervention alone can respond to the many causes and vulnerabilities leading to food and nutrition insecurity. Together, our impact will be more effective, efficient and at scale. Health, Food Security, Nutrition, WASH and other relevant clusters must work collaboratively to coordinate timely and multisectoral interventions to provide life-saving emergency assistance and livelihood protection to meet the most pressing needs of vulnerable populations<sup>9</sup>.



<sup>9</sup> 220616-Intercluster Famine Statement: Urgent and coordinated action needed to avert wide-scale catastrophe. June 2022. <https://www.nutritioncluster.net/resources/joint-statement-urgent-and-coordinated-action-needed-avert-wide-scale-catastrophe>