



High-level Roundtable on Nutrition

Hosted by the Foundation for Community Development, the Graça Machal Trust and the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition

Maputo, Mozambique, 28 June 2017

OVERVIEW

This High-level Roundtable on nutrition was developed and hosted jointly by the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, the Foundation for Community Development Mozambique (Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade, (FDC) and the Graça Machel Trust. Its primary aim was to explore how the Global Panel's work could inform Mozambique's strategic approach to food and nutrition security by achieving healthy diets for all; now and in the future.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- **Immediate action is required.** The gravity of Mozambique's challenge demands action now. Despite significant investment (160million USD in the last 6 years), and the priority given to nutrition by successive administrations (as evidenced by multiple government strategies and initiatives from 1995 onwards), the prevalence of malnutrition, when measured against key indicators, remains unacceptably high.
- **Call for leadership.** The case for action is growing in Mozambique's national consciousness from the grass roots to central government. Sustained high-level political leadership and the elevation of SETSAN to mainstream nutrition will help to secure an enduring legacy which will live beyond a single administration. Parliament is ready to 'embark on the nutrition agenda'.
- **Co-ordination and multi-sectoral approaches.** Principal actors must co-operate more effectively. Co-ordinating infrastructure is needed at national, provincial and district levels to support all sectors to link nutrition sensitive policies, to catalyse behaviour change and to inform healthy food choices. Given the constraints on both human and financial capital, coordinating investment is essential in order to maximise resources and impact.
- **Focus on local implementation.** Engaging directly with districts in developing, implementing and tracking progress and impact is essential for success. Multi-sectoral approaches need to be implemented at local levels with a focus on the most affected geographical areas. Failure to involve communities in framing and monitoring "demand-led" initiatives will be a major barrier to effective and accountable action. Top down and bottom up approaches must combine to inform the transition to healthy diets.
- **Improve connectivity.** The successful local implementation of national policy will falter unless there is well-developed connectivity between central government and district administrators. Effective, transparent two-way communication will empower local actors with the autonomy and confidence to develop solutions tailored to local circumstances, and to be accountable for delivery.
- **Build capacity.** Increased resource is needed to develop and implement policy effectively. Enhanced human capacity and financial support are fundamental to

advancing healthy diets. The education system should re-focus on developing curricula to grow the numbers of community agents and nutrition professionals working in food and nutrition security, and to inform consumer choice at district level.

- **Close the knowledge gap.** Insufficient and low-quality data at the sub-national level are a major barrier to the development and implementation of effective nutrition interventions. A comprehensive exercise to map the prevalence of malnutrition and its determinants in families and communities in a small number of districts is called for to aid the development of targeted, tailored and effective interventions.
- **Regional perspectives.** Policy-makers can learn from the experiences of other countries by reviewing interventions developed, for example, in Brazil, Thailand, Bangladesh for adaptation to use in Mozambique.
- **Invest now.** Investment today could yield a substantial benefit-cost ratio in the future through increased productivity and a reduced public health burden. The current 89% of under-2s who lack an adequate diet will carry their chronic physical and cognitive impairments into later life when their health, wellbeing and economic potential will be compromised alongside their contribution to society as the workforce of tomorrow. This must be addressed.

PROGRAMME

Moderator: Prof Emilio Tostão, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Agricultural Development, University Eduardo Mondlane (UEM); Director of Director of the Research Center for Agriculture Policy and Programms in Portuguese Centro de Estudos de Políticas e Programas Agroalimentares.

Opening remarks

Speaker: Mrs Graça Machel, Founder and President, Foundation for Community Development and the Graça Machel Trust.

Reflections from the Global Panel

Speaker: H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Global Panel member and Former Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission.

Presentations (see Annex 1)

Global Panel Foresight report

Speaker: Professor Sandy Thomas, Director, Global Panel

Overview of the conclusions and recommendations set out in the Global Panel's Foresight report and reviews and their implications for Mozambique.

Mozambique's FSN challenges and priorities

Speaker: Edna Possolo, Secretária Executiva, Secretariado Técnico de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (SETSAN)

Review of Mozambique's nutrition landscape, including malnutrition challenges, national food security strategies and opportunities and challenges for implementation.

Roundtable

The discussion was moderated by Prof Emilio Tostão and conducted under the "Chatham House Rule".

DISCUSSION

Key points raised:

- Despite significant investment (160million USD in the last 6 years) and the high priority given to nutrition by successive administrations (as evidenced by multiple government strategies and initiatives from 1995 onwards), the prevalence of malnutrition in Mozambique, when measured against key indicators, remains unacceptably high. Notably, for example, little progress has been made in addressing the level of stunting which remains at 43% in under-5s. There is a danger that these persistent high levels of malnutrition will lead to these conditions becoming “normalised” and therefore lacking in visibility and attention.
- The gravity of situation in Mozambique demands immediate action. The current 89% of under-2s who lack an adequate diet will carry their chronic physical and cognitive impairments into later life when their health, wellbeing and economic potential will be compromised alongside their contribution to society as the workforce of tomorrow. Already, since 2015, close to 11% of GDP has been lost due to malnutrition and the erosion of Mozambique’s “grey-matter infrastructure”. The situation will be exacerbated if “business-as-usual” approaches to diet and food systems are maintained over the next 10 to 20 years.
- Parliament is ready to “embark on the [nutrition] agenda”. In view of the magnitude of the task, co-operation and multi-sectoral approaches are key. Principal actors must re-focus on implementation and move forward together to advance food and nutrition security and to realise the potential of Mozambique and its citizens. Stakeholders must develop a common agenda, combined approaches and clearly identified roles for all; in particular, the private and public sectors, CSOs and donor communities. In this way, their effort might be co-ordinated much more effectively by integrating nutrition sensitive policies in for example agriculture, health and education, to catalyse behaviour change and to inform healthy food choices. Access to water and sanitation, and healthcare along with food preparation behaviours at household level are also critically important.
- Many organisations are calling for raising the status of SETSAN to CONSAN. This increased profile and responsibility would enhance government’s capacity to legislate for food security and to implement integrated policies, strategies and programmes, particularly at district level. Departments and others would be better placed to work together to create an enabling environment for change and for interventions to be monitored for their efficacy at the practical (local) level, and to target resource allocation and multi-sectoral implementation where there is greater need
- The successful local implementation of national policy will falter unless there is well-developed connectivity between central government and district administrators empowered with the autonomy and confidence to develop solutions tailored to local circumstances. Specifically, even with high-level, cross-government political support and MPs acting as nutrition champions, good vertical links are essential to identify effective family and community interventions, the good practices already in place and specific enabling district structures, so that they can be effectively communicated to the centre to inform national policymaking.
- Interventions must be evidence based. Insufficient and low-quality data at the sub-national level are a major barrier to the development and deployment of effective interventions. Many data reflect provincial averages only and lack the granularity required to develop tailored, local initiatives. Key stakeholders (e.g. FDC, SETSAN and academia) recognised the need to co-ordinate and undertake an immediate exercise to map the prevalence of malnutrition and its determinants

comprehensively at family and community levels in a small number (three to five) districts. Local tertiary education institutes might be approached to provide not only data and information but also personnel (students) to undertake surveys and mapping initiatives.

- Increased resources are needed to implement policy effectively at all levels. Enhanced human capacity and financial support are fundamental to advancing multi-sectoral solutions and, at a time of multiple constraints, what is available must be used in a directed, co-ordinated and integrated way. Using and building on existing structures that can help improve nutrition outcomes is also key, for example, the education system should refocus on developing curricula to grow the numbers of community agents and nutrition professionals working at district level. Leaders and decision makers should be alive to opportunities to scale up successful domestic innovations such the school feeding programme, and to learn from other LMICs for example, by reviewing interventions in Brazil, Thailand and Bangladesh for adaptation. In addition to human and financial capacity requirements, there is a need for core materials such as clothing and basic technologies to enable community practitioners to work effectively.
- Experience from other countries in the region demonstrates the value of sustained high-level political leadership. Mainstreaming nutrition in government policy and the development of co-ordinating infrastructure are key to realising healthy diets for all. For example, between 2010 and 2015, Tanzania significantly reduced levels of stunting, an achievement made possible by strong presidential support, well developed co-ordination mechanisms and by channelling key decisions through the prime minister's office. Leadership, and enabling infrastructure at and between all levels of governance from districts to central government was essential. The devolvement of operational responsibility for example through regional commissioners, the creation of district-level budgets (with guidelines for distribution) and a comprehensive map of available resources (including donors) provided the framework for integrated action. In Malawi, attention to nutrition increased after 2013, when political ownership was transferred directly to the Office of the President and calls to the Ministry of Finance for funds were treated sympathetically. Subsequent elections passed ownership back to the Ministry of Health, which has impacted the national profile of nutrition.
- Failure to involve local communities in framing "demand-led" policy will be a major barrier to the development of effective and accountable interventions. Top down and bottom up approaches must combine to ensure the full spectrum of thinking and expertise, including consideration of the traditional, religious and cultural factors impacting diets, is brought to bear on the transition to improved nutrition.
- The Global Panel's conceptual framework, which sets out the relationship between the four domains of the agriculture and food system and the food environment, is an insightful and useful analytical tool. The model might be further developed to show how structural factors, for example, climate change (there have been major droughts and floods which have had a devastating impact in recent years) and population growth, might influence the various elements of the model and shape food choices and nutrition outcomes.
- The call to action on nutrition in Mozambique should be considered in a context of sustainability framed by the SDGs, the Malabo declaration and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. Specifically, this means putting in place plans and interventions to end hunger and stunting in under-5s by 2030 and avoiding the preventable deaths of children (with particular reference to the "first 1,000 days"), adolescents and mothers which result from malnutrition and its associated non-communicable diseases.