

EXISTING WORKFORCE NUTRITION POLICIES IN MOZAMBIQUE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT



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KEY MESSAGES

- People spend 1/3 of their adult lives at work. By leveraging the workplace as a connector to people, we can bring access to and knowledge about healthy nutrition to millions of people around the globe through **workforce nutrition**.
- The most important opportunities for refining and expanding workforce nutrition policies include the integration of **workplaces as priority intervention areas** in strategic plans for enabling better nutrition, **the incentivisation of healthy food provisioning** at or near the workplace (such as through tax benefits), and further **strengthening parental leave entitlements** in line with international standards.
- With supportive policies in place, as well as accompanying minimal **accountability** and **compliance mechanisms**, even greater impact can be achieved.

SETTING THE SCENE

Malnutrition in all its forms, from undernutrition to micronutrient deficiencies and overnutrition, is a global public health burden. It is estimated that 2 in 3 women of reproductive age are affected by nutrient deficiencies¹. The burden of malnutrition in Mozambique is marked by high rates of child stunting (38%) and micronutrient deficiencies among women of reproductive age as well as an increasing prevalence of overweight among adult men and women (18% and 34% respectively)². There is a continued need to engage all actors and options to address the malnutrition burden the world faces. On average, people spend one-third of their adult lives at work, whether formal or informal; therefore, the workplace offers an important opportunity to increase access to and knowledge about healthy nutrition. Workforce nutrition is an opportunity to deliver proven benefits for employers, workers, and communities. A definition and framework for workforce nutrition can be found [here](#).

In recent years, Mozambique has taken some critical steps to enable improved nutrition for the wider population by introducing the Multisectoral Action Plan for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition (PAMDRC, 2011-2015)³ and the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (ESAN-II, 2007-2015)⁴. However, policy frameworks often do not recognise the role of employers in enabling good nutrition for workers, even as part of labour policies. Further improved action in the policy arena would include explicitly mentioning the role of the employer and drafting, implementing, and ensuring accountability mechanisms against these policies are in place. Such action could help start or scale up workforce nutrition programmes and contribute to addressing the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

WIN-WIN-WIN APPROACH

As elaborated in a [GAIN evidence brief](#)⁵, poor-quality diets and insufficient food quantity are linked to reduced work capacity. This suggests that reducing malnutrition can be a win-win-win approach: improving individual lives, business

¹ Stevens, G. A., Beal, T., Mbuya, M. N., Luo, H., Neufeld, L. M., Addo, O. Y., ... & Young, M. F. (2022). Micronutrient deficiencies among preschool-aged children and women of reproductive age worldwide: a pooled analysis of individual-level data from population-representative surveys. *The Lancet Global Health*, 10(11), e1590-e1599.

² Global Nutrition Report. Mozambique. (2022). <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/eastern-africa/mozambique/>

³ Ministério da Saúde. (2010). Multisectoral Action Plan for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition in Mozambique (PAMDRC) 2011-2020.

⁴ Secretariado Técnico de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. (2007). Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (ESAN-II) 2007-2015.





⁵ Nyhus Dhillon, C. & Stone, G. The evidence for workforce nutrition programmes. 2019. <https://www.gainhealth.org/resources/reports-and-publications/evidence-workforce-nutrition-programmes>

outcomes, and national economies. Individual outcomes observed as a result of workforce nutrition programmes have included increased job satisfaction, reduced sick days, higher consumption of healthy foods, and increased duration of exclusive breastfeeding, amongst others. Business outcomes are reduced absenteeism, enhanced productivity, reduced medical costs, and significantly lower rates of accidents and mistakes, which together could lead to an increase in the national GDP⁶. **Thus GAIN, as part of the Workforce Nutrition Alliance, urges regulators and policymakers in Mozambique to support employers by drafting, implementing, and monitoring public policies for improved workforce nutrition.**

IMPROVING WORKFORCE NUTRITION RELATED POLICIES

An outline of the four nutrition pillars for workforce nutrition and the related existing policies in Mozambique is presented in Table 1. Through a comprehensive policy analysis, the table highlights opportunities to further employer-driven approaches for improving nutrition among formal worker populations. Even greater impact can be expected when expanding existing policies to cover workers in supply chains (as opposed to only those directly employed by the company) as well as establishing minimal accountability and reporting requirements against these policies.

Table 1: Existing policies and opportunities to further strengthen policies on Workforce Nutrition in Mozambique based on analysis of national labour and nutrition policies

Nutrition theme	Existing workforce nutrition related policy components	Opportunities for further strengthening policies on workforce nutrition
Healthy Food at Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implicit reference in Art.59(k), Labour Law (2007) stating employers to not run cafeterias for profit⁷. Rather, companies should provide affordable food to workers. Art. 109(2)(b) references meal allowances that may be included in payments in addition to wages^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. Article 148 directs employers of industrial establishments with more than 30 workers to have a separate dining area, with maintenance of premises, keeping in mind comfort of workers⁸. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise employers to provide and subsidise healthy meal options available at or near the workplace (e.g., through tax benefits) Apply and incentivise minimum nutritional requirements for food provisioning (prioritising nutritious foods and minimising unhealthy food offerings) Consider incentivising fortified and/or biofortified foods wherever possible in worker meals and/or rations Ensure workers' representation in food management committee
Nutrition education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need to enforce regulations that address food and nutrition awareness, and healthy lifestyles is reflected in strategic objectives, though there is no direct reference to targeting workplaces^{Error! Bookmark not defined. Error! Bookmark not defined.}. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise employers and worksites to reinforce government mass media campaigns on healthy eating and good nutrition with messaging to workers.
Nutrition-focused Health Checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art.221, Labour Law (2007) states that enterprises with a private health unit shall regularly examine employees for health and physical fitness. The present mandatory social security includes health coverage for employees⁹. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specify the inclusion nutrition-related indicators in existing health screenings. Incentivise employers to provide and subsidise complementary nutrition counselling for workers (either for all workers or at least those at risk, as identified by health checks). Ensure that pregnant workers have access to government-provided additional health screening (e.g., antenatal check-ups) during working hours.
Breastfeeding Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art. 12(1), Labour Law (2007) provides for 60 days of maternity leave and Art. 12(5) provides for one day every two years of paternity leave^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. Art. 11 (1)(c), Labour Law (2007) specifies breastfeeding breaks of two half-hour periods or a single period of one hour, without loss of pay, for up to one year^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend paid maternity leave to 18 weeks as per ILO recommendation 191. Extend paid parental leave for supporting spouses (e.g. paternity leave) to at least two weeks. Incentivise provisioning of breastfeeding-friendly facilities at or near workplaces. Promote male empowerment and participation in breastfeeding (awareness) programmes as a greater component to be prioritized for inclusivity.

⁶ Lambrechts, M. & B. Stacy. Increasing productivity and reducing vulnerable employment. Atlas of the Sustainable Development Goals. 2020. <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgoalatlas/goal-8-decent-work-and-economic-growth/>

⁷ Labour Law, 23/2007. (2007).

⁸ Art 148. Legislative Diploma 48/73. Health and Safety at Work in Industrial Establishments Regulation. (2017).

⁹ Law 4/2007, Law on the Social Protection system. (2012)

A CALL TO ACTION

The government of Mozambique has taken positive steps towards establishing nutrition-sensitive strategic objectives and guiding policies for the general population in recent years. Now, policymakers are encouraged to leverage these as opportunities to specify workforce nutrition-friendly plans and priority interventions that would improve nutrition practices of the adult working population. Further refining and expanding existing policies to encourage minimal but broad workforce nutrition standards would help address the burden of malnutrition. Essential considerations include incentivising employers to provide subsidized healthy meal options at or near the workplace and applying minimum nutritional standards for food provisioning. Besides, policy makers and influencers should consider ensuring or incentivising that regular health checks are in place in line with labour law and include nutrition-related indicators in such health screenings. There is also substantial scope to expand parental entitlements in line with international standards and to further incentivize breastfeeding-friendly workplaces. Finally, an even greater impact could be achieved by expanding the coverage of existing policies to include workers in supply chains (as opposed to only those directly employed by the company) as well as ensuring minimal accountability and compliance mechanisms. When combined, these actions towards reducing malnutrition may be a win-win-win approach: improving individual lives, business outcomes, and national economies.