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Strengthening and Protecting Rural Livelihoods during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Mozambique

Mabote District, Inhambane Province. UNCDF/Mbuto Machili

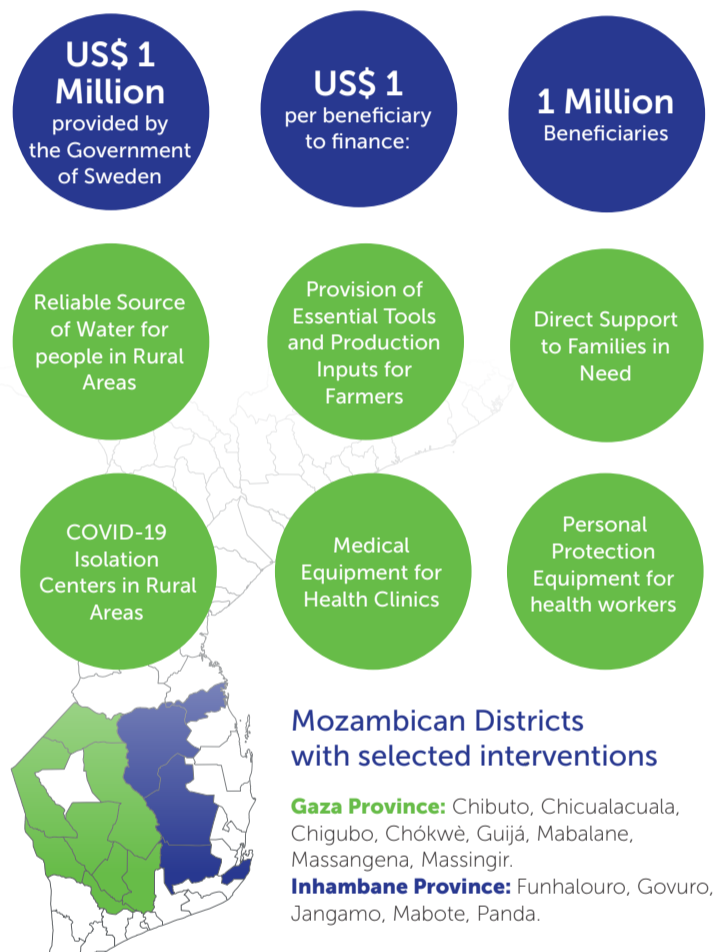
The Government of Mozambique is making sure that Local Governments have the necessary capacities to fight the spread of COVID-19, protect rural livelihoods and prevent the emergence of a widespread food insecurity emergency.

Local governments are leading the COVID-19 responses around the world, including in Mozambique.

With financial support of the Government of Sweden and technical assistance of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the Government of Mozambique has taken action to strengthen and protect the sustainability of rural families' livelihoods, which were already under the threat of climate change and now face the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the **Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL)**, the Government of Mozambique supports Local Governments' COVID-19 response for the continued provision of essential services and relief measures for local economies under the following interventions scope:

- ▶ **Community awareness and mobilization** is critical for effective epidemic response
- ▶ **Social protection measures** become crucial to prevent the disproportionate impact of an epidemic on the most vulnerable populations.
- ▶ **Enforcement of public order and regulations** to contain an epidemic is closely related to the community awareness and mobilization actions undertaken by local governments.
- ▶ **Continued provision of essential services** is the foremost responsibility of local governments.
- ▶ **Relief measures for local economies** are designed to dampen the economic consequences of an epidemic, particularly in sectors likely to be among the hardest hit.



Local Governments are on the frontline of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Their voices need to be heard

The process of selection and prioritization of the investment projects at the district level is carried out by the local governments in consultation with local communities through the Local Consultative Councils. The projects reflect local government and community priorities and their voices.

1 Funds Mobilized: Funds are transferred to UNCDF

2 Decentralized Capital Grants: UNCDF transfers the funds to the Provincial Service of Economy and Finance in Gaza and Inhambane Provinces for operational budget support.

3 Dialogue with Local Communities: Through the local consultative councils at the district level, an economic and political dialogue is established and the local communities themselves decide which interventions within the scope given will be implemented.

4 Prioritization by Local Governments: Local governments confirm the selected interventions in a prioritization process that takes into consideration technical and financial aspects as well as statutory competences and responsibilities of local governments and their fiscal position.

5 Validation by Provincial Government: The Provincial Service of Economy and Finance in Gaza and Inhambane Provinces validate the interventions and start the procurement process to deliver the assets and services selected by local communities.

6 Delivery to Local Communities: During the delivery of assets and services to local communities at the district-level, Government officials seize the opportunity to raise awareness and sensitize communities on measures to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.



Technical support from the UNCDF, Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Land and Environment as well as Provincial Services of Health and Economic Activities (Agriculture and Fishery) during the whole process.



Mabote District, Inhambane Province. UNCDF/Mbuto Machili



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Access to safe water is essential for sustainable rural livelihoods and fighting against COVID-19

LoCAL in Mozambique

UNCDF, through its government-led **Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL)**, and with the technical and financial support of the **Government of Sweden** provides decentralized climate finance to local government in the form of capital grants that are used for financing climate resilient, public sector infrastructural investment projects.

The objective is twofold:

1. To build the capacity of Local Governments to provide quality public services to its citizens; and
2. To enhance, diversify and strengthen local livelihoods that are affected by climate change.

LoCAL understands that local bodies have the mandate to deal with many of the issues directly affected by climate change such as drainage and water management, land use planning, road maintenance and other issues which affect food security.

LoCAL development methodology channels funds directly to the local level while providing incentives for local governments to mainstream climate-adaptive thinking into everyday planning and investment.

LoCAL and the COVID-19 Response

It is within the **LoCAL** programmatic framework that additional technical and financial support can be provided to the local governments in Gaza and Inhambane to fight the spread of the COVID-19.

This support will enhance the number and improve the quality of the adaptive development interventions currently being carried out by the local governments themselves in collaboration with the Provincial Service of Economy and Finance and the Provincial Service of Environment in Gaza and Inhambane provinces.

The articulation and close dialogue among the local government authorities and the Provincial Services of Health and Economic Activities (Agriculture and Fishery) are being enhanced to ensure that the livelihoods plans, budget and finance are aligned with the local communities social and economic needs in Gaza and Inhambane Provinces.

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More water, less walking, safer and healthier communities: Investing in Local Governments during COVID-19 in Mozambique

Inhambane, Mozambique - "Before the water supply system, the community suffered from water scarcity and had to walk long distances to neighbouring villages in search of the precious liquid", says Bernardo Pedro Matsinhe, leader of the village of Macura, Chitanga Locality, Mabote District.

Such was the distance to fetch water, that people stayed overnight in neighbouring districts like Govuro and Inhassoro, according to Matsinhe.

"In the village meetings, the local consultative council meetings, the administrative post consultative council meetings, as well as in the district-level meetings, the people have spoken on the lack of water in the village of Macura", continues Mr. Matsinhe.

Through the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL), United Nations Capital Development Fund Programme (UNCDF) implemented by the Government of Mozambique, the voices and needs of local communities, such as that of Mr. Matsinhe and those of the inhabitants of Mabote District, are heard and essential public services are provided by the local governments themselves to communities to foster climate change adaptation and, now, also to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 crisis exacerbates the impact of climate change

Mozambique is among the countries most prone to natural disasters in the world. The occurrence of those such as floods, cyclones, rising sea levels, coastal erosion, droughts and earthquakes have had a significant impact on the people and economy, with even greater intensity in recent years. Inhambane Province itself suffered from cyclone Dineo in 2017 and is currently facing drought in most of its territory.

The COVID-19 crisis exacerbates the impact of climate change. It puts at-risk the livelihoods of rural populations already compromised by the emergence of food and nutrition insecurity due to extreme weather conditions.

Water and soap are a priority; Now, I feel more protected from COVID-19 because I have water

"Water and soap are a priority; Now, I feel more protected from COVID-19 because I have water," says Rahele Johane, member of the Local Consultative Council in the Benzene Locality, Mabote District.

"[In addition] having a water source is important because at least we have water to drink, we can cook, wash clothes and water animals without having to walk several kilometers", continues Ms. Rahele.

The Benzene Locality as well as the Chitanga Locality are part of LoCAL's interventions in the Mabote District within the scope of strengthening the capacities of local governments to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In many cases, interventions in the areas of water, hygiene and sanitation protect entire communities from COVID-19 while strengthening and safeguarding their livelihoods.

In total, local communities in the 13 most vulnerable districts of the Gaza and Inhambane Provinces, covered by LoCAL, benefit from the support of the Government of Sweden facilitated by their Embassy in Maputo for the construction of climate-adaptive infrastructure in the midst of COVID-19 as well as for the preparation and response to the pandemic itself.

Mabote District: LoCAL action for local results

Amid the uncertainty resulting from the global health crisis, the allocation of funds to the districts follows a participatory approach involving and seeking to meet the needs of local communities.

The process includes women and men who represent the communities within the districts and aims at improving accountability of the local governments on issues related to governance and socio-economic development.

The most important thing in this process is to listen to the communities, what their concerns are

"The most important thing in this process is to listen to the communities, what their concerns are", says H.E. Secretary of State for Inhambane Province, Ms. Ludmila Maguni.

According to the Mabote District Administrator, Mr. Carlos Eduardo Mussanhane, "the selection of projects is an instrument for multiplying participation and democracy at the local level".

Mabote District is located in a semi-arid region, where water scarcity is a complex challenge.

For the Administrator, the LoCAL Programme resources are essential, not only for the supply of drinking water, but also to catalyse development actions in priority sectors that impact the livelihood of local communities and reinforce the response to the demands arising from COVID-19 in the areas of water, hygiene and sanitation; education and health services, as well as smallholder's farming and rural livelihoods.

In addition to new water supply systems, members of the Mabote District Consultative Council decided to prioritize the acquisition of materials for the prevention and fight against COVID-19, including personal protective equipment and thermometers for health workers.

Isolation tents were also purchased. The tents make up the only isolation center in the entire district that has an area of 14,000 km² and more than 45,000 inhabitants.

"Before, we didn't have an isolation area, so we could not comply with the protocol for health and treatment or COVID-19 preventive measures", comments Ms. Glória António Alfredo, Director of the District Service for Health, Gender, Child and Social Action.

For Ms. Glória, "if health personnel are prepared to deal with COVID-19 and with personal protective equipment, they protect not only themselves, but also the entire community".

"If we didn't have the isolation area, COVID-19 positive patients would be forced to cross the infirmary where other patients with other pathologies are. This would be very complicated because it would endanger the health of other patients", continues the District Director.

Bridging the finance and capacity gaps

Mabote District and Inhambane Province are clear examples of how close dialogue between local authorities and the Provincial Services of Health and Economic Activities (Agriculture and Fishery) has been strengthened through the LoCAL Programme. Its most significant result is the guarantee that plans to safeguard livelihoods, budgets and finances are aligned with the social, economic and health interventions selected and prioritized by the local communities themselves.

According to Ramon Cervera, UNCDF Programme Officer in Mozambique, "local governments are in a unique and privileged position to lead the planning and budgeting processes; At the same time, local governments promote and increase the articulation of emergency interventions to fight COVID-19 without losing the perspective of long-term social and economic development planning".

"Local governments are at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic; this is why UNCDF's decentralized technical support strengthens the capabilities of district governments to integrate COVID-19-related financial support into local planning and budgeting processes", says Ramon Cervera.

LoCAL Program field work is conducted in Mozambique by local authorities with supervision and direct support from the Ministry of Economy and Finance in coordination with the Ministry of Land and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Ministry of Health through their decentralized governance structures; and technical support by UNCDF.

All the activities of the LoCAL Program under COVID-19 are carried out thanks to the financial support of the Government of Sweden facilitated by their Embassy in Maputo.