



Republic of Mozambique  
Ministry of Health  
Human Resources Directorate



Human Resources  
for Health  
Observatory of  
Mozambique



# Focus on the **NUTRITIONIST**

World  
Nutrition  
Day

## On March 31st it was celebrated the World Nutrition Day.

Nutrition is a biological process in which the organisms (animals and plants), using food, assimilate nutrients

to perform their vital functions. In the health and medicine field (and also in veterinary), the nutrition is the study of the relationship between ingested food and the diseases or the well-being of men or animals. (1)

Areas of nutrition: clinical nutrition, community nutrition/public health, collective feeding and hospitality sector, food technology/food science, education/training and the scientific research.

The person behind the health nutrition, the Nutritionist, is the health professional that develops study functions, guidance and

surveillance of food and nutrition, as concerns to its adequacy, quality and safety, in individual or groups, in the community or institutions, including the assessment of nutrition status, with the aim of promoting health and wellness and the prevention and treatment of the disease, according to the respective scientific and technical rules . (2)

## Training

According to the publication of «Statistics of 36 years of training in the training institutions of the Ministry of Health 1975-2010», 142 nutritionists were trained in the period under analysis, 50 in basic level and 92 in

medium level. From 2007 to 2011 the Training Institutions of the MoH (MISAU) didn't graduate professionals in this area, having resumed the training of 4 medium level groups of nutrition technicians, only in 2012, in Maputo, Tete, Chimoio and Nampula provinces, two in 2012 and other two in 2013.

So far the two institutions that train top level nutritionist are the Maputo Superior Health Science Institute and Lurio University, in Nampula, which have graduated 70 nutritionists in 2012.

The National Health Services had 114 professionals in the nutrition area until December 31st, 2013, with a total of 22 technical assistants of health (that is, basic level), 48 health technicians

(that is, medium level) and 44 superior level professionals.

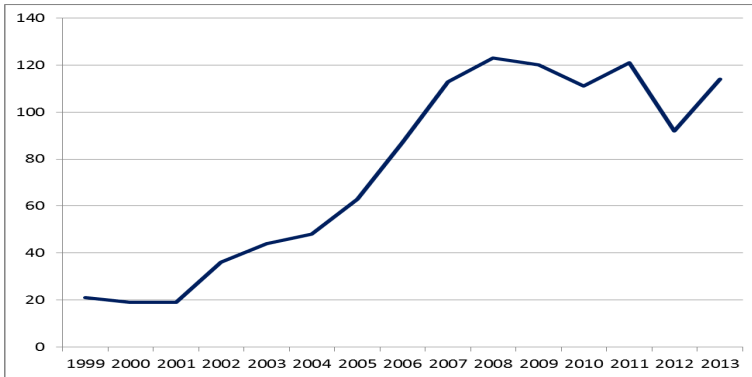
The provinces with more staff working effectively in nutrition are Nampula (23), Maputo City (15) and Manica (12). Gender differences for this occupational area are not so marked, existing at national level (58) female nutritionists and (56) male nutritionists. It is important to note that this data only correspond to staff with Mozambican nationality.

## Trends

Through the information that has been reported about professionals involved in the nutrition area, we can see an increasing trend, as concerns to human resources in this specific area of health, since 1999. However,

as shown in Chart 1 below, 2008 was the year in which were reported more professionals in the nutrition area, but from 2009 this number has been decreasing. From 2010 to 2011, the numbers have risen again, but from 2011 to 2012 there was a sharp decline.

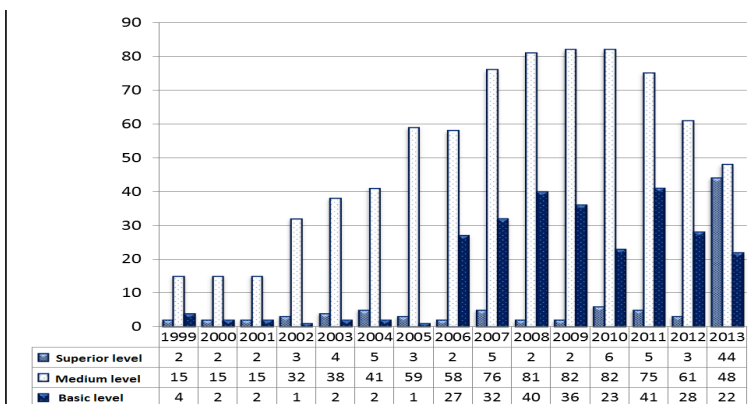
**Chart 1:** Evolution of the national staff of the nutrition area in the National Health Service, 1999-2013



Source: MISAU/DRH- REI

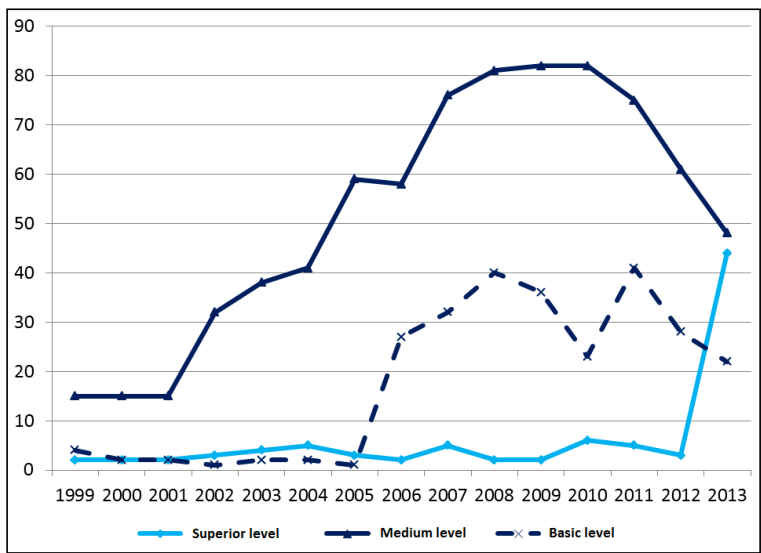
The Chart 2 shows the evolution of the staff of the nutrition area divided by the three professional category levels (Superior, Medium and Basic Level) and in absolute numbers.

**Chart 2:** Evolution of the staff in the nutrition area by level of professional category in the National Health Service 1999-2013



A better illustration of the trend can be obtained in the Chart 3.

**Chart 3:** Evolution of the staff in the nutrition area by level of professional category in the National Health Service 1999-2013



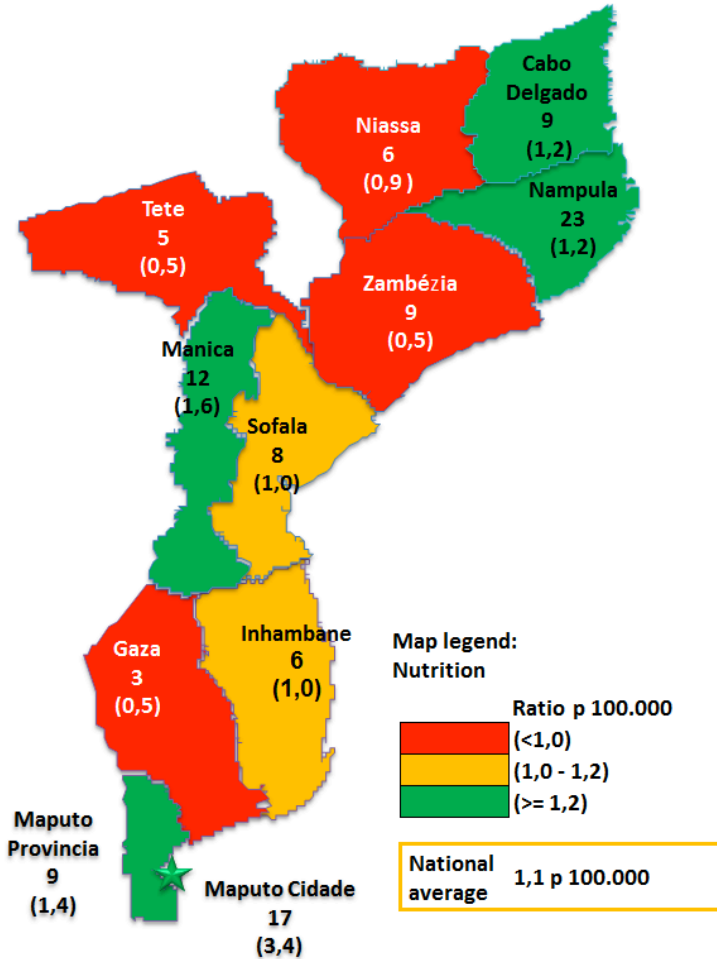
### The Staff needed

We have 114 nutritionists, but the recommendation was that we should have 274 until 2014. Besides that, the UN recommends between 460 to 2300 high level nutritionists (graduates, masters and doctorates). In the case of Mozambique, it would be the minimum of 9,2 per 100,000 inhabitants. With a current ratio of 0,9/100,000 inhabitants, we're 23 times below the recommended one.

See map 1.

Due to the shortage of qualified staff, one of the MISAU strategies advocates the training of doctors, medium level health technicians, elementary multipurpose agents and traditional healers in the nutrition area. «National politicians and decision-makers at provincial and district levels need to be sensitized, to create more positions for properly qualified nutritionists».

**Map 1: R tio** of nutritionists per 100,000 Women on fertile age and children from 0 to 5 years old, by province, year 2012



Total number of nutritionists = 107. The 7 nutritionists of the Central Level are not included in the calculation of the ratio

## Nutrition Status in Mozambique

The nutrition topic is very important in our country, where we are greatly affected by the poor nutrition and the malnutrition, often as result of the lack of information about what to eat. «According to the Demographic Health Survey (IDS), we have in Mozambique, about 43% of chronic malnutrition, 6% of acute malnutrition, 14% of underweight for age approximately.

The entire Mozambican population is a target for the nutritionists, «but in the context of public health, more specifically in actions to reduce malnutrition, the following groups are more focused within a program called «A thousand days»: women before and during pregnancy, children under 5 years, for us teenagers are also a priority, because of the early pregnancies and

the deficient health status.

In the context of the non-communicable diseases and the promotion of good nutrition practices, are include all members of family units, including those with infectious diseases, especially chronic diseases, such as HIV and Tuberculosis as well as elderly patients» - explained Edna Possolo, Chief of the Nutrition Department of the Ministry of Health.

«With the support of several partner institutions and active donors, the Government of Mozambique initiated in 2010 the implementation of an ambitious Multi-sectoral Plan of Action for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition (PAMRDC), with the aim of reducing chronic malnutrition in children under 5 years of age from 44% in 2008 to 30% in 2015 and 20% in 2020».

Therefore, among others, it is the role of nutritionists to develop programs in the nutrition area and food safety, the administration of community feeding programs and services in schools, hospitals, industries, NGOs; dietary counseling and diet therapy in the National Health System; the

implementation of applied nutrition programs and dietary and clinical-nutritional surveys; the inspection of feeding services, the follow-up of inpatients and outpatients and the organization of nutrition services in their area of activity. (4)

## Bibliography:

1. From <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nutri%C3%A7%C3%A3o>
2. From <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nutricionista>).
3. Ministry of Health, Human Resources Directorate - DRH, «Statistics of 36 years of training in the training institutions of the Ministry of Health 1975-2010», 2011
4. Profile of the nutritionist of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FCS), from Lúrio University
5. «Final Capacity of 21.03.2013» document kindly provided by Dra. Edna Possolo, Chief of the Nutrition Department of MISAU.

## Technical File

**Directorate:** Martinho do Carmo Dgedge

**Technical Team:** Manuel Macebe; Alice Dabula, Leonilde Melembe, Yasser Gulamo, Rui Langa, Marcelle Claquin

**Contact:** Human Resources for Health Observatory of Mozambique

**Tel:** 21430814/04271319(4) Ext. 368

