

MOZAMBIQUE

Health leaders working to improve the lives of women, children, and adolescents in Mozambique have to confront a challenging environment. A civil war ravaged the infrastructure from 1974 to 1992, corruption recently caused global donors to pull back from supporting a common fund for health, and a financial crisis caused by undisclosed debt has slowed growth in a country that remains one of the poorest in the world.

In this setting, it is not surprising that health indicators are poor. Average life expectancy is 55. Family planning is desperately needed, with women bearing on average nearly six children and the pregnancy rate of 15- to 19-year-old girls reaching 65 percent in some provinces. Nutrition is also lacking, and some 43 percent of children under five are stunted.

The Mozambican Ministry of Health is committed to turning these indicators around by focusing on scaling up the most effective interventions to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition. Officials were keen to participate in the GFF, both for the catalytic financing it offers and for the technical assistance needed to get their existing 2014–19 Health Sector Strategic Plan on track.

Mozambique has just completed a crucial first step in the GFF relationship by building a five-year Investment Case. For the past two years, the Ministry of Health has owned the process of identifying which of many components of the current strategic plan to target with performance-based indicators. In this process of prioritizing, inequity was on top, leading to a focus on the 42 highest-need districts in the country.

Key health ministry officials worked closely with development partners in the health sector to shape the program and shared drafts of the Investment Case with donors, civil society, and the private sector for their input. Smaller teams focused on specific technical areas. The adolescent team, for example, invited about 60 young people, aged 10 to 24 years, to Maputo for a day of discussion to learn what they need most from the health system.

Mozambique hopes to achieve improvements in health systems, such as training of community health workers and performance of hospitals and clinics. It is also targeting health service delivery outcomes involving better nutrition and family planning, and more mothers giving birth in hospitals. In a major shift, financing will be tied to achieving these results, rather than funding the process of getting there.

Development partners have provided crucial technical assistance along the way as well. To tackle the paucity of information, for example, the Ministry of Justice is leading the development of a civil registration and vital statistics system to track births and deaths. UNICEF is providing technical assistance, funded by the government of Canada, to help them align six systems and multiple ministries.

The government is now incorporating the priorities of the Investment Case into its annual plan and budget. This process has benefited from the GFF's links with the World Bank Group, which has brought in governance experts able to address the public financial management challenges (which also increases the confidence of development partners in the process).

The GFF process has also strengthened the coordination of external financing. A number of development partners have committed to finance the Investment Case, including US\$25 million from the GFF Trust Fund and US\$80 million from IDA. The World Bank Group is also establishing a multidonor trust fund (and possibly additional single-

donor trust funds for donors with specific requirements) in the country that will enable donors to use the World Bank's procurement and fiduciary systems while channeling resources to the Investment Case priority areas.

With the government still depending on foreign aid for nearly 70 percent of its health budget, it is also collaborating with the health partners on a health financing strategy. The government is exploring ideas such as taxes on tobacco to boost domestic spending and ensure the program is sustainable. An implementation plan is being developed to translate the key priorities into action. The government has agreed to tie some of the financing from IDA and the GFF Trust Fund to a commitment that the government's own health spending be maintained even in the face of a challenging fiscal environment that is seeing cutbacks in other areas.

With the support of GFF, Mozambique is on its way to saving and improving the lives of women, children, and adolescents who are most in need.