

## **Management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants under 6 months & their mothers (MAMI): Activity mapping in West and Central Africa**

### **Acknowledgements**

The management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants under 6 months & their mothers (MAMI) activity mapping in West and Central Africa was conducted by ENN as MAMI Global Network Coordinator in December 2022. The exercise was undertaken by Gwénola Desplats, supported by Eleanor Rogers (MAMI Global Network Coordinator) and Marie McGrath (MAMI Global Network Co-Chair).

### **Suggested citation**

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### **Key messages**

ENN, representing the MAMI Global Network, conducted a light touch mapping exercise to identify appetite, commitments and plans on MAMI related policy, research and programming in West and Central Africa. The review found research and service development are being planned or in early stages in several countries. There is a strong appetite for doing more on MAMI in the region, with high demand for a regional (and francophone) platform to synergise activities and exchange experiences. This review identified several key actions to support growing momentum in the region and to learn from developments including:

- Establishment of a West and Central Africa community of practice/implementers group within/linked to an existing regional forum/structure
- Engagement across health and nutrition stakeholders in service development and delivery.
- Consultation with and participation of national stakeholders in target countries.
- Translation of key MAMI materials/communication aids into French
- Highlight the relevance of MAMI to regional priorities, including prevention of wasting.

The review has catalysed MAMI conversations with regional stakeholders on next steps. Actions to date include formation of a francophone MAMI implementers group. UNICEF and WHO are demonstrating strong leadership to take this initiative forward.

## Background

Small and nutritionally at-risk infants under six months of age are at higher risk of death, malnutrition, and poor development than their well-grown counterparts. Small and nutritionally at-risk infants include those identified as wasted, stunted, underweight, low birth weight, or a combination of these.

The [MAMI Global Network](#) is a group of programmers, researchers, and policymakers from across the globe working towards realising the [vision](#) that local, national, and international collaborators work together to improve policy, programmes and practice for these infants and their mothers. Its mission is to build an effective and energetic network to enhance mutual capacity, bridge disciplines, address evidence gaps, and champion MAMI care.

To support implementation, the MAMI Global Network developed the [MAMI Care Pathway Package](#). This resource guides health workers on how to identify and manage at-risk infants under six months of age and their mothers especially in community settings. It is not a standalone package/intervention but requires adaptation to context, wherever possible building on and connecting to what already exists for maternal and infant health and nutrition services. It involves feeding counselling, clinical care and supportive maternal-infant care continuity to six months of age. It applies and builds upon established Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) guidelines, breastfeeding counselling tools and relevant local protocols. The MAMI Care Pathway has been piloted or implemented at small scale and is being used to inform development of services in different contexts (including Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Senegal and India).

In 2022, members of the MAMI Global Network gathered informal reports that indicated that stakeholders in West and Central Africa (WCA) were increasingly interested in and engaged in MAMI activities. To provide the MAMI Global Network and regional stakeholders with a better idea of regional demand, interest and initiatives and potential global/regional collaboration, ENN conducted a light touch mapping exercise in December 2022.

## Objective

To identify appetite/interest/commitments/plans/direction of travel on MAMI policy, research and programming in WCA and identify how the MAMI Global Network could support and further engage with the region.

## Methods

The MAMI Global Network Coordinator identified key contacts, including those from United Nations (UN) agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Further contacts were identified through personal networks, including through the members of the WCA Regional Nutrition Working Group (RNWG).

We contacted 25 global, regional and/or national stakeholders through different means of communication (email and phone messages). A total of 11 key informant interviews (see [Appendix 1](#) for example interview questions) were conducted with personnel when there was an indication of a significant engagement/plan for MAMI activities and to explore the potential to strengthen engagement with the MAMI Global Network.

We conducted interviews (by Zoom or email) with:

1. An independent researcher in Senegal
2. The nutrition specialist (in charge of wasting prevention and care), UNICEF WCA Regional Office
3. A technical officer for nutrition, World Health Organization (WHO)
4. A senior nutritionist and food security officer, UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Headquarters
5. The MAMI advisor for Save the Children headquarters, United Kingdom
6. Regional Coordinator Health-Nutrition, Action Contre La Faim (ACF)
7. The health technical director for WCA, Terre des Hommes (TdH)
8. The paediatrician advisor and lead for MAMI in paediatric and sexual reproductive health working group, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Spain
9. The nutrition advisor and MAMI lead in the Nutrition working group, MSF-Spain
10. The medical country coordinator for Senegal, Medicos del Mundo
11. The senior technical advisor for nutrition and water sanitation and hygiene, MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience

## **Results**

Key informants showed interest in learning more about MAMI programming/service development and engaging in a WCA/francophone MAMI community of practice. Although informants mentioned wasting as the key risk factor for infants in the region, the high prevalence of babies born low birth weight was also mentioned. The prevention of wasting was frequently mentioned as the main rationale to strengthen the MAMI approach, which reflects that while treatment of child wasting is very developed in the region, its prevention is considered weak – in both spread and scale.

There was an indication that it was a good time for key stakeholders to engage in MAMI service development. Some organisations had already included projects in their 2023 work plans or others had identified MAMI as a priority area to follow up on (see Table 1). Inadequate funding was cited as a reason for delays in pursuing MAMI service development. Niger and Mali, and to some extent Senegal, appeared to be the countries where stakeholders were most interested in starting to develop and implement MAMI care through research and service development. Most key informants were keen to work across sectors and engage with the health sector.

**Table. 1: Summary of planned and ongoing MAMI activities in WCA**

Country	Organisation	Planned, ongoing and/or interest in MAMI activities
WCA region	UNICEF WCA Regional Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested in MAMI as a wasting prevention measure.</li> <li>Timely contact as MAMI has been included in the 2023 workplan, a UNICEF regional proposal is in development and UNICEF recently linked with health colleagues to design a joint package of interventions.</li> <li>There is interest in supporting operational research on MAMI.</li> </ul>
	WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitised to MAMI and taking all opportunities to include infants under six months in guidelines and training.</li> <li>Plans for 2023 include strengthening the baby friendly hospital initiative and the dissemination of the WHO recommendations for care of the preterm or low birth weight infant.</li> <li>There is potential to collaborate on MAMI and for WHO to support the translation and dissemination of resources.</li> </ul>
	Save the Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MAMI training package for frontline health workers is under development and will be publicly available in French in 2023.</li> <li>There are plans to translate the Guidance Note on Save the Children’s Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Tools for MAMI Implementation into French.</li> <li>Highly involved in MAMI at global level, but less engagement on MAMI in the region.</li> </ul>
	ACF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MAMI is part of ACF’s 2023 action plan, but funding is required to implement planned activities.</li> </ul>
	MSF Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work is being undertaken to look at how to implement zero separation in MSF projects.</li> <li>Data on infants under six months is being collected as a part of some rapid nutrition assessments.</li> </ul>
	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a regional presence and available for engagement with other partners.</li> </ul>
Niger	UNICEF WCA Regional Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Niger has been identified as a country where MAMI activities could potentially be started.</li> </ul>
	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR is present in country and available for engagement along other partners.</li> </ul>
	TdH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are ambitions to implement TdH’s IMCI digitalisation programme (leDA).</li> </ul>
	MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOMENTUM plans to adapt and implement the MAMI Care Pathway working closely with the national government. Several geographic areas will be selected to pilot the MAMI Care Pathway, with learnings being used to inform national policies.</li> </ul>
	MSF Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2021 an e-care electronic algorithm for newborn consultation, which includes maternal health, was developed and piloted in Niger, with hopes to scale up to other countries in 2023.</li> </ul>
Mali	UNICEF WCA Regional Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mali has been identified as a country where MAMI activities could potentially be started.</li> </ul>
	TdH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In collaboration with World Vision International and ACF, TdH aims to integrate CMAM with IMCI. An algorithm (Aledia) has been developed building on MAMI Care Pathway and piloting (pending funding) is planned for 2023.</li> </ul>
	ACF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in preparation work in partnership with TdH. Awaiting funding to start implementation.</li> </ul>
	MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOMENTUM plans to adapt and implement the MAMI Care Pathway working closely with the national governments. A number of geographic areas will be selected to pilot the</li> </ul>

Country	Organisation	Planned, ongoing and/or interest in MAMI activities
		MAMI Care Pathway, with learnings being used to inform national policies.
Senegal	Independent researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At national level, the 1,000 days initiative appears to be the entry point for MAMI.</li> <li>Research on the feasibility of implementing the MAMI Care Pathway is ongoing by the researcher.</li> </ul>
	Medicos del Mundo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested in conducting and contributing to MAMI activities.</li> </ul>
Burkina Faso	TdH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TdH have conducted several evaluations of their IMCI digitalisation programme (leDA), with further potential for data analysis specific to infants under 6 months.</li> </ul>
Democratic Republic of Congo	UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MAMI was identified as a country priority, but no action is yet planned.</li> </ul>
Guinea	TdH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TdH have started to implement their IMCI digitalisation programme (leDA) and are looking for funds to scale-up.</li> </ul>
Mauritania	TdH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are ambitions to implement TdH's IMCI digitalisation programme (leDA).</li> </ul>
Cameroon	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR is present in country and available for engagement along other partners.</li> </ul>
Chad	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR is present in country and available for engagement along other partners.</li> </ul>

Action Contre La Faim (ACF); World Health Organization (WHO); West and Central Africa (WCA); Terre des Hommes (TdH); Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

## Reflections

This review showed a strong appetite for joining forces and doing more on MAMI in the region, with high demand for a regional (and francophone) platform to share experiences and learning.

Conversations identified several strong synergies including agencies planning similar activities/research but who were not aware of each other. For example, MSF has created an e-care electronic algorithm for newborn consultation which has been piloted in Niger, with Tdh also having ambitions to implement their IMCI digitalisation programme (leDA). Niger has been identified by UNICEF as a possible country to kick start MAMI activities in, with MOMENTUM also planning to start implementation in 2023.

This review identified several research projects that have generated untapped evidence or data. For instance, TdH have conducted several evaluations of their digitalisation programme on Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (Pozo-Martin et al, 2018; Cousens et al, 2018; SUNa, 2022, SUNb, 2022; Tdh, 2021), with further potential for data analysis specific to infants under 6 months. UNICEF are interested in engaging in operational research in the coming years. While MOMENTUM have the potential to conduct operational research as a part of their plans to adapt and implement the MAMI Care Pathway in Mali and Niger.

Following up on the push made to increase exclusive breastfeeding rates in the region (through the 'Stronger with breastmilk only' regional campaign implemented in 2019-2022 under the leadership of UNICEF, WHO, and Alive and Thrive), there was an indication that there is an opportunity for these regional actors to push forward implementation and research around MAMI to evidence policy. UNICEF and WHO have shown enthusiasm to engage with MAMI, commitment to bridge the nutrition and health sectors, and are demonstrating strong leadership to take this forward.

## Way forward for MAMI stakeholders in the WCA region

### 1. *Facilitate francophone synergies*

There is a need to develop synergies among WCA actors to share experiences and learnings. This could be achieved through the implementation of a francophone MAMI Regional Interest Group.<sup>1</sup> This group is best placed within or linked to an existing active regional mechanism, such as the RNWG, with a direct connection to the MAMI Global Network through a focal point. The idea of a francophone implementers' group should be explored further with those that have indicated an interest in engaging in MAMI.

It is important to expand on this light touch mapping, to explore interest from other stakeholders at regional and country levels not captured in this rather light touch mapping exercise. National representatives in target countries and engagement with the health sector, including reproductive/neonatal health and maternal health and nutrition, should be prioritised at the start of this process. It will be important to engage those planning or undertaking research to facilitate synergies and collaboration at regional level and to connect stakeholders to work happening at global level to support evidence generation and identification of research priorities that reflects regional needs. These engagements could be formalised by including them in the MAMI Global Network annual work plan.

### 2. *Support implementation*

#### *Ensure key materials are available in French*

Several partners have initiated translation of several resources from the MAMI Global Network into French. It's important we all start building the base of materials available in French and being more strategic in this work, this includes

- 1) reviewing what is available and identifying gaps, and
- 2) ensuring proper quality assurance to harmonise materials that are already available.

#### *Raise MAMI profile*

WCA stakeholders should more widely understand MAMI rationale, tools, service development approach and implementation opportunities. This could initially be done through a short webinar or presentation, for example, a presentation in an RNWG meeting or a short webinar targeted at interested implementers. Other avenues to disseminate MAMI programming could also be explored, such as the opportunity to piggyback on webinars and training conducted at country and/or regional levels. It is critical that the momentum with organisations that have indicated an interest in MAMI is maintained.

#### *Build interest in MAMI programming*

Data and advocacy tools/messages should be created and targeted at key stakeholders, including donors. To support the development of tools, it might be advantageous to produce a short advocacy brief highlighting the scope of the issue in WCA and connecting it to regional priorities and agendas, such as prevention of wasting. The 2-pager developed by ACF for advocacy on small and nutritionally at-risk infants in Mali could be used as a starting point.

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<sup>1</sup> Modelled on "MAMI Country Chapters". A MAMI Country Chapter is a network that may be formed at national or sub-national level to enhance mutual capacity, bridge disciplines, highlight evidence gaps or champion MAMI care according to local needs and demand. The aim is to bring a MAMI lens to existing or prospective in-country initiatives, departments and groups across policy, research, and practice to help harmonise country efforts and to provide a direct avenue for country-driven priorities and developments to inform and be informed by global actions. A Country Chapter should be located within an established national entity (e.g., a government department/advisory group/professional body). A designated focal point is connected to the MAMI Global Network Coordinator.

## Conclusion and next steps

This review showed a strong interest in more MAMI actions in the WCA region. Key stakeholders along with the MAMI Global Network should take several follow-up actions immediately to maintain momentum in the region, which to date have included the convening of a francophone MAMI implementers group connected to the MAMI Global Network<sup>2</sup>; UNICEF and WHO are demonstrating strong leadership to take this initiative forward. National stakeholder engagement will be critical to realising demand-driven, sustainable scalable care for small and nutritionally at-risk infants under six months and their mothers.

## References

Pozo-Martin F, Blanchet K, Cousens S, et al (2018) Economic impact study of the Integrated eDiagnosis approach (IeDA). TdH; LSHTM; Centre Miraz.

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## Appendix:

### Example interview questions

1. In your country/region, what do you think are the drivers of small and/or nutritionally at-risk infants under six months? Do you think that those infants and their mothers need support?
2. Is your organisation planning or delivering care for small and nutritionally at-risk infants under six months and their mothers?
3. Are you using or familiar with the MAMI Care Pathway?
4. Have you translated any tools or materials, or have you made any adaptations to the materials in your context, that you could share with the other MAMI GN members?
5. Would you have any training materials you would be willing to share with others?
6. Would you like to be part of the MAMI Global Network?
7. What support would you like from the MAMI Global Network to further the MAMI agenda in your region/country?

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<sup>2</sup> To find out more about this group and how to join please email: [mami@enonline.net](mailto:mami@enonline.net)