


EVOLUTION OF LIVING CONDITIONS IN NIASSA PROVINCE, MOZAMBIQUE: A COMPARISON BETWEEN 2019/22

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Oclídio Francisco Tete¹ and Olga Pedro Lourenco²

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the evolution of the living conditions of families in Niassa Province, Mozambique, between 2019 and 2022. Based on indicators of quality of life and access to basic services, the survey evaluated crucial dimensions such as the quality of water consumed, access to public services, dietary standards, housing conditions, and employment opportunities. The results highlight significant changes in several indicators, revealing progress and challenges within the socio-economic context of the region. This work contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of living conditions in Niassa and provides valuable insights for the formulation of public policies aimed at sustainable and inclusive development.

Keywords: Niassa. Living Conditions. Sustainable development. Basic Services.

¹ Doctorate student in Mathematical Engineering, Statistics and Operations Research
Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain
E-mail: oclidesfrancisco@gmail.com or oclidiof@ucm.es

² Department of Economic Statistics - Niassa Delegation
National Institute of Statistics - Mozambique
E-mail: olourenco79@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The living conditions of the people represent one of the main indicators of the socio-economic development of a region. In developing countries, such as Mozambique, understanding these conditions is essential for the formulation of external public policies to reduce social inequalities and promote well-being. The Ni Assa Province, located in the north of the country, faces major challenges related to poverty, unequal access to basic services and precarious living conditions.

This study aims to analyze the evolution of the living conditions of families in the Province of Niassa, based on indicators of quality of life and access to essential services between the years 2019 and 2022. The research addresses fundamental issues, such as the quality of water consumed, access to public services (such as hospitals, schools, police stations and markets), food patterns, housing conditions and access to employment, seeking to identify advances, setbacks and persistent inequalities.

Throughout the work, quantitative data from databases from 2019 and 2022 were used, allowing a detailed comparative analysis. Thus, this study not only provides an up-to-date view of the socio-economic reality of the Province, but also highlights relevant aspects for the formulation of public policies that promote sustainable and inclusive development.

PROBLEMATIZATION

The Niassa Province in Mozambique faces historical challenges related to poverty, limited access to basic services, and social inequalities. Despite governmental and international efforts to improve living conditions, the question remains: *What were the significant changes in the living conditions of the Niassa population between 2019 and 2022, and to what extent did public and social interventions develop for these changes?*

MOTIVATION AND JUSTIFICATION

This study was motivated by the need to understand the dynamics of living conditions in Niassa Province, one of the most vulnerable regions of Mozambique. Understanding the changes between 2019 and 2022 is crucial to identify progress, setbacks, and areas that require urgent intervention. The results can inform political decisions, resource allocation, and evaluation of existing public policies. The justification for the study is based on the importance of providing empirical data on quality of life indicators, such as access to drinking water, energy, food and housing. In addition, this work will contribute to national and international efforts to monitor the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 6 (access to clean water and sanitation).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

The one by Nascimento Cruz et al. [2015], characterizes inequality based on the conditions offered to the population, stating that when offered, they differ in the degree of quality and effectiveness depending on the social subjects that will benefit.

For do Nascimento Cruz et al. [2015], inequality can be described as an imbalance in the standard of living of a given population, present in undeveloped and underdeveloped countries where income distribution occurs disproportionately.

Araújo [2017] states that inequality is a phenomenon of multiple dimensions, which concerns unequal conditions and that different social groups are subjected to in terms of the ability to satisfy their basic needs, the fulfillment of their rights, among other factors, it concerns the contrast between a group of people who hold large amounts of wealth, social and material capacities to meet their needs and has ensured their rights and other groups of people with insufficient income who are unable to meet their basic needs, without access to essential services and deprived of basic rights.

As for the concept of poverty, it is something very complex, according to Costa [2014] and Mague dhe [2016] define poverty as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of resources, skills, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Additionally and sharing the idea of authors, Truzão [2013], Zitha [2012], among others, argue that the concept of poverty encompasses several faces that require its understanding based on the theoretical and methodological approaches that conduct each research in a given context. Therefore, the notion of poverty in the present work should be seen as the set of socioeconomic factors as well as the ways of interpreting this phenomenon and how the individual perceives his own social situation.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

Multidimensional poverty is a model for assessing poverty, in which monetary income is considered as a determining variable of the degree of deprivation of the individual or family. Multidimensional poverty is structured on concepts such as de, functioning, cover,

citations and deprivations according to Kerstenetzky [2000]. The Alkire-Foster (A-F) methodology, one of the most widely used methodologies internationally for measuring multidimensional poverty, developed by Sabina Alkire and James Foster. It differs from traditional measures of poverty that are based only on income and consumption, by considering several dimensions of deprivation simultaneously such as Education, Health, Access to basic services, adequate housing, among others.

URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

De Oliveira et al. [2014], discuss connections between urbanization and ruralization processes, emphasizing the importance of an integrated approach to sustainable development. De Oliveira et al. [2014] argue that urban and rural dynamics cannot be treated in isolation, as they influence and shape socioeconomic reality in an interdependent way. He points out that in an increasingly urbanized world, rural development should be considered as an extension of urban policies, promoting social inclusion and environmental preservation.

De Oliveira et al. [2014] analyses the challenges faced by rural areas such as migration to other urban centres and the need for adequate infrastructure, proposing solutions that involve the participation of communities and the use of appropriate technologies. This critical perspective is fundamental to understanding development in contemporary contexts where the boundaries between rural and urban become increasingly fluid.

Santánna et al. [2011] discuss several theories and approaches related to rural development, critically analyzing traditional models and proposing a more integrated view that considers the social, economic and environmental dimensions. This author emphasizes the importance of community participation and the valorization of local knowledge, arguing that rural development must be an inclusive and sustainable process. The author criticizes approaches that prioritize only economic growth, suggesting that true development must consider the quality of life of rural populations and the preservation of natural resources. These ideas contribute to a broader and multidimensional understanding of rural development, aligning with other contemporary currents that seek alternatives to the hegemonic model of development.

Sustainable Development

According to Serra [2017], the theory of sustainable development is not limited to economic growth, but involves the promotion of freedom and human capacities, social, political and environmental aspects. He argues that the true measure of a society's development is the extent to which its people have the freedom to live the lives they value and highlights the importance of social justice and equal opportunity that benefits all people.

Urbanization and Spatial Inequality

According to Giacobbo [2021], spatial inequality in cities is a reflection of market forces and government policies that favor certain groups to the detriment of others. It highlights that urbanization and spatial inequality influence the urban structure and the distribution of power and resources within cities.

Santos [2017], argues that cities are places where both opportunities and inequalities are concentrated, and that the way urban space is organized reflects and perpetuates social and economic divisions. It discusses how urban sprawl, gentrification, residential greaggregation, and lack of access to basic services contribute to the creation of territories marked by inequality.

According to Carlos [2020], urban space is a field of conflicts and contradictions, where different interests and actors dispute the control and use of the territory. The right to the city represents not only physical access to urban spaces but also the possibility of actively participating in their production and transformation. It defends the idea of an urbanization centered on the needs and aspirations of citizens promoting social justice, participatory democracy and quality of life for all.

SANITATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

According to Chadwick [1942], the theory of sanitation and public health is based on the belief that poor hygiene and sanitation conditions are responsible for the spread of disease and the deterioration of the health of the population. He advocated the idea that improving sanitary conditions, including clean water supply, waste treatment, and proper drainage, was essential to prevent disease and promote health. It emphasizes the importance of government intervention and the implementation of public policies to ensure access to healthy living conditions for all citizens. He also argues that investing in sanitation and public health measures would not only benefit the population but also bring economic and social benefits to society as a whole.

FOOD SAFETY

According to Sen [1981], food insecurity is not only the result of food shortages, but is more related to access to these foods, which he calls priority rights. It brings to light the importance of the economic and social conditions that allow people to purchase food and not just the physical availability of food. This perspective has revolutionized the way food security is understood, emphasizing the need for policies that guarantee access and not just the supply of food.

According to Henrique et al. [2016], communities can develop appropriate practices and rules to manage their own food sources, promoting resilience and self-sufficiency. The active participation of the community in the management of food resources is fundamental to face challenges such as food scarcity and climate change, reflecting the importance of collective actions in promoting food security.

According to Pharr [2000], the decrease in participation in community activities and the weakening of social networks negatively impact access to information, economic opportunities and social support, thus exacerbating existing inequalities.

For Sen and Dreze [1999], development should be seen not only as economic growth but as a process of expanding people's freedoms and capacities. It discusses how access to resources and opportunities are key to reducing inequality, including in rural areas where living conditions can be challenging. He emphasizes the importance of considering individual capabilities and the barriers that people face, including social, economic, and political factors that affect access to essential goods and services.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

According to Sen and Dreze [1999], true development should not only be measured by economic growth, but also by people's ability to lead a life they value. For them, social inclusion is key to ensuring that everyone has access to the opportunities and resources they need to fulfil their potential. Sen and Dreze [1999] introduce the concept of capacities, which refers to the real freedoms that individuals have to choose the way of life they want. Social inclusion in this context implies eliminating barriers that prevent people from exercising their abilities, such as poverty, discrimination and lack of access to education and health. In this way, Sen and Dreze [1999] highlight the importance of public policies that promote equity and social justice, aiming at holistic and sustainable development.

For Fernandes et al. [2010], the importance of valuing and recognizing the various forms of knowledge and experiences that exist in societies defends an inclusive perspective

that seeks to combat social inequalities and promote social justice. He critiques the hegemonic vision of knowledge and proposes the need for a sociology of absences, where marginalized voices and experiences are heard and valued.

The philosopher Walzer [2008] argues that justice should be understood in different social spheres, each with its own norms and values. He advocates for the inclusion of diverse cultures and groups within a pluralistic society. The work highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting differences, promoting a form of justice that takes into account the specific realities of each social group.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on data from the Household Budget Survey (IOF), conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Mozambique, for the years 2019 and 2022. The databases are national, with data that include 259 variables and 70470 observations (families that answered the IOFs). From these bases, a filter was made and a sub-base was created with only families from the Province of Niassa, which was the focus of our study. The sub-bases had 3734 observations. Regarding the variables, the study was based on variables related to housing (type and conditions of house), Water quality, Food (number of daily meals and value corresponding to meal) and access to basic services (Health, School, Safety, Transportation and Market).

The analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical methods, which were used to summarize the main variables in each year. In addition, data visualization techniques were used/applied to facilitate the interpretation of the results.

The analyses were carried out with the support of statistical software, SPSS (the format in which the databases were acquired) and R (software used for analysis), ensuring precision in the manipulation of data and in the generation of results. This procedure allowed a robust comparison of living conditions between the two periods analyzed (2019 and 2022), highlighting significant changes and their implications for public policies.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The analysis of the sample distribution between urban and rural areas in 2019 and 2022 offers important insights into the living conditions and socio-economic context of households in Niassa Province. In the graph in Figure 1, it can be seen that in 2019, the sample included 1721 families in urban areas and 2,013 in rural areas, reflecting a greater concentration of families in rural areas, a predominant characteristic of the Province's

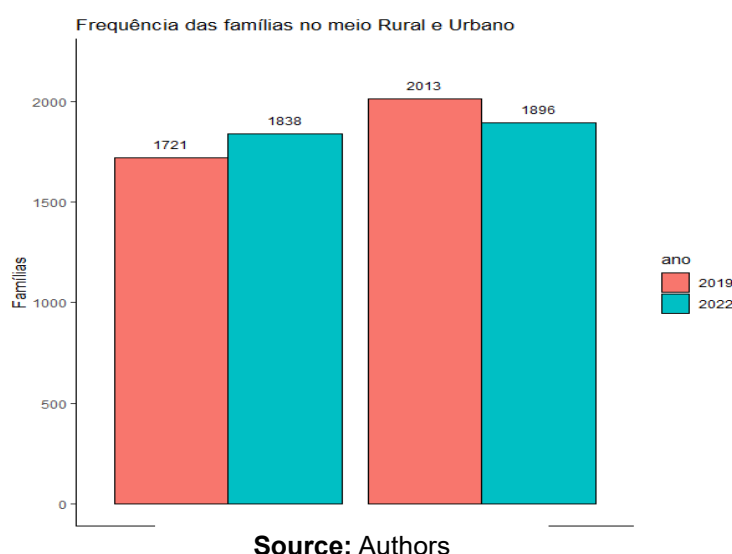
demographics. In 2022, there was an increase in the number of families interviewed in the urban area, which went to 1,838, while in the rural area this number reduced slightly to 1896.

The growth of the sample in urban areas may be related to the progressive urbanization observed in many regions of Mozambique, driven by factors such as migration in search of better job opportunities, basic services and infrastructure. However, the reduction in rural representation in 2022 suggests that the sample may be reflecting changes in the reach or focus of data collection policies, as well as possible logistical challenges in reaching more remote communities.

This distribution is also crucial for understanding the disparities between the two contexts. As previously noted, aspects such as basic sanitation, access to drinking water, energy and housing conditions show marked differences between urban and rural environments. Urban areas tend to have greater access to infrastructure, while rural areas face greater difficulties, such as longer distances to access essential services and greater reliance on traditional materials and natural resources for housing and energy.

The representativeness of the sample in both media is essential to assess the impact of public policies and identify specific priorities. While the urban environment may demand improvements in the quality and accessibility of basic services, the rural environment requires interventions that reduce structural inequalities and promote integrated development. The changes in the numbers between 2019 and 2022 reinforce the importance of disaggregated analyses, to capture the specificities of each context and better guide development actions in Niassa Province.

Figure 1: Families in rural and urban areas



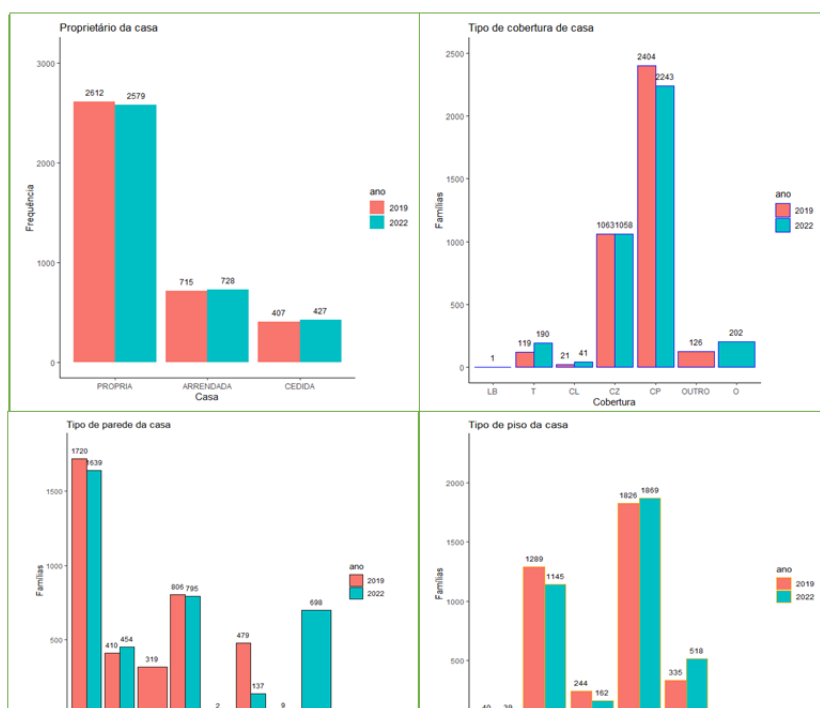
The analysis of housing conditions in the Province of Niassa between 2019 and 2022 highlights important changes in housing characteristics and ownership. In the graphs in Figure 2, it can be seen that in 2019 most families lived in their own homes, while a smaller portion lived in rented houses and in ceded or inherited houses. This scenario reflects a predominance of self-sustaining housing, characteristic of rural and semi-urban areas in the region. However, in 2022, there was a decrease in the number of households living in their own homes, accompanied by an increase in the number of ceded/inherited residences, suggesting a worsening of economic conditions that limit the ability of households to maintain or acquire their own property.

As for the roof of the houses, in 2019, most of the houses had grass roofing, followed by the use of zinc sheets and, to a lesser extent, tiles. This pattern reveals the predominance of traditional and affordable materials, which are widely used due to their local availability and reduced cost. However, the choice of roofing material reflects, in part, the socioeconomic conditions of the families, since zinc sheets and roof tiles are more durable options and often associated with better living conditions.

The walls of the houses also had distinct characteristics in 2019, with most being built of matope blocks, a traditional locally sourced material, followed by wattle and daub walls and a smaller number of constructions made with cement blocks. These characteristics reflect a dependence on natural and low-cost materials, still prevalent in rural areas. However, the use of cement blocks, although less frequent, indicates a trend towards modernization in some locations.

Regarding the floor of the residences, in 2019, most of the houses had floors covered with matope, followed by cement floors. A smaller number of homes had mosaic floors, while others had no flooring at all. This distribution highlights inequalities in access to more durable construction materials and the difference in living conditions between families of different socioeconomic levels. In 2022, the drop in the number of homes owned may be associated with changes in materials or the degradation of housing conditions.

These data underline the need for housing policies aimed at improving housing conditions, promoting the use of more durable and accessible materials, as well as encouraging the construction of own housing. In addition, it is essential to strengthen initiatives that increase access to economic resources and financing programs to enable families to maintain or improve their living conditions. The changes observed between 2019 and 2022 reflect the economic and structural challenges faced by the populations of Niassa Province, highlighting the urgency of public interventions to reduce housing inequalities.

Figure 2: House Type**Source:** Authors

The analysis of basic sanitation conditions in Niassa Province between 2019 and 2022 reveals significant changes in the use of sanitation facilities by households. In the graph in Figure 3, it can be seen that in 2019, most households used improved latrines, followed by those that used unimproved latrines. In third place were households using improved traditional latrines, while a smaller number had toilets with toilets inside the house, with or without flushing toilets. However, there was also a significant portion of families without access to any type of toilet, who resorted to the open air or used facilities in neighboring houses.

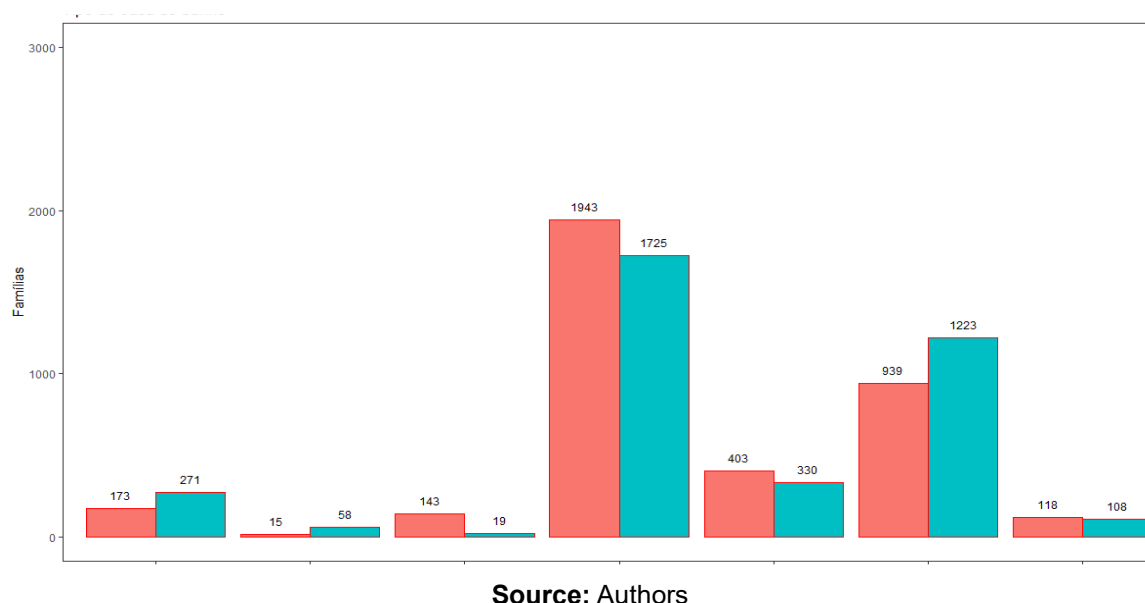
The scenario in 2022 points to a worsening of sanitation conditions. There was a decrease in the number of households with access to improved latrines, as well as in those using traditional improved latrines. On the other hand, there was an increase in the number of families that started to depend on unimproved latrines, in addition to an increase in the number of families without access to any type of latrine, which indicates a setback in basic hygiene and sanitation conditions in the region.

This worsening possibly reflects economic difficulties faced by families, as well as limitations in investments in basic sanitation infrastructure. The reduction in the use of improved latrines and the increase in open defecation practices pose a high risk to public

health, contributing to the spread of waterborne and infectious diseases, such as diarrhoea and parasitic diseases, especially in more vulnerable rural areas and communities.

Given this scenario, it is urgent to implement public policies aimed at expanding and improving sanitation conditions in Niassa Province. This includes promoting access to safe sanitation facilities, encouraging the use of accessible technologies for improved sanitation, and raising awareness among communities about the importance of basic sanitation for health and well-being. The setback observed between 2019 and 2022 highlights the need for joint efforts between governments, non-governmental organizations, and communities to ensure universal access to decent hygiene and sanitation conditions.

Figure 3: Type of Latrine used



The comparative analysis of access to drinking water between 2019 and 2022 in Niassa Province reveals significant changes in the sources of supply used by households. In the graphs in Figure 4, it can be seen that in 2019 most households obtained water from piped sources outside their homes, followed by the use of water from surfaces, such as rivers, ponds, and ponds. A smaller number used piped water indoors, while a minimal portion depended on sources in neighboring houses and other families consumed mineral water. In 2022, there was a worrying growth in the number of families that started to depend on water from unprotected surfaces and wells, while the use of piped sources, both internal and external to homes, as well as fountains and mineral water, decreased.

Increased use of water from unprotected surfaces and wells is a clear indicator of a backlash in access to safe drinking water sources. These resources, although accessible in terms of proximity, are generally of low quality, being vulnerable to contamination by waste, sewage, and human or animal activities. On the other hand, the decrease in the use of piped sources inside or outside the home suggests difficulties related to the maintenance and expansion of water infrastructure, possibly aggravated by economic and administrative challenges.

As for the quality of the water consumed, in 2019, most households had access to fresh water, while a smaller portion resorted to turbid water contaminated by plants and animals, especially in rural areas where the supply depended on surface sources. In 2022, the scenario worsened, with a reduction in freshwater consumption and a significant increase in the use of turbid and contaminated water. This change directly impacts public health, increasing the risks of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea and cholera, especially among children and other vulnerable populations.

Another worrying aspect is the increase in the distances traveled by families to access water sources in 2022. While in 2019 the sources were relatively close, allowing households to save time and energy in their search for water, in 2022 these distances increased considerably. This shift reflects not only the deterioration of local sources, but also the impact of the lack of investment in decentralized and efficient water supply systems.

The need to travel longer distances to fetch water has significant social and economic implications. In many cases, this task falls mainly on women and children, who lose valuable time that could be dedicated to other activities, such as study, work or leisure. In addition, the additional physical exertion contributes to the physical and emotional exhaustion of these populations, further increasing their vulnerability.

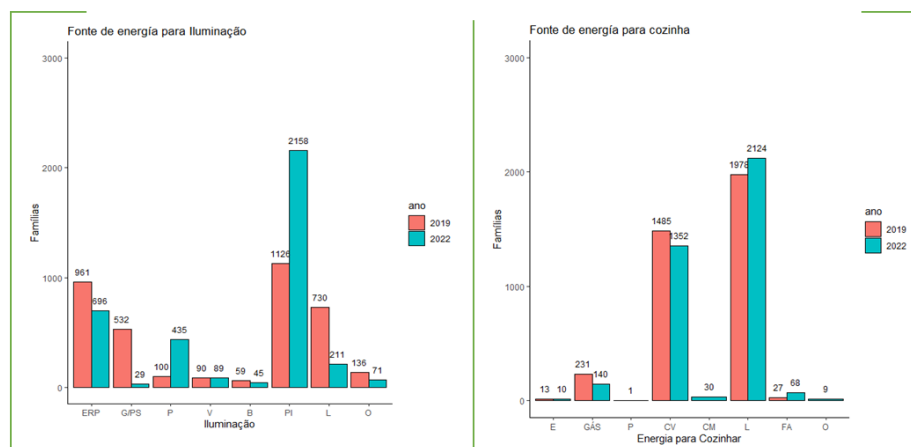
The data analyzed reinforce the urgent need for public policies aimed at expanding and improving access to drinking water in Niassa. Investments in the construction of secure supply systems, such as protected wells and distribution networks, are essential to reduce dependence on unsafe sources and improve the quality of life of families. In addition, it is essential to implement awareness programs on the safe and sustainable use of water, as well as strategies to bring water sources closer to communities, promoting local development and ensuring access to an essential resource for survival.

In the context of the energy source for cooking food (kitchen), the data show that, in 2019, firewood (L) was widely used as the main source of energy, followed by charcoal (CV) and, to a lesser extent, cooking gas. In 2022, the use of firewood for cooking increased even more, while the consumption of charcoal and gas decreased significantly. Interestingly, there was an increase in the use of animal feces (AF) as a source of energy for cooking, evidencing the search for low-cost alternatives in the midst of adverse economic conditions.

The increase in the use of firewood and animal feces for cooking can be explained by the relative accessibility of these sources in rural areas, where many households depend on locally available natural resources. However, this pattern of energy consumption has serious environmental and social consequences, such as deforestation and exposure to household air pollutants, which affect the health of families, especially women and children, who are usually responsible for cooking.

On the other hand, the decrease in the use of charcoal and gas suggests that these energy sources have become economically unviable for many households, due to rising prices and the lack of subsidies or programs that promote access to cleaner fuels. This change is worrisome, as it indicates a setback in access to safer and more efficient energy sources, compromising efforts to improve quality of life and reduce environmental impacts.

These transformations in energy consumption patterns for lighting and cooking highlight the urgent need for public policies that encourage the use of renewable and sustainable energy sources, such as solar panels and biogas, in addition to promoting the expansion of the public electricity grid in Niassa. The increase in the cost of living combined with dependence on traditional sources reflects a situation of energy vulnerability that requires coordinated actions to ensure universal access to clean and affordable energy, as provided for in the global sustainable development goals.

Figure 5: Energy for Lighting and Cooking

Source: Authors

The comparative analysis of data on household eating habits in Niassa Province between 2019 and 2022 shows a significant deterioration in access to food, reflecting the increase in the cost of living and the decrease in purchasing power. In the graph in Figure 6, it can be seen that in 2019 most families were able to have two meals a day, while a smaller portion depended on only one meal and, in smaller numbers, there were families that were able to eat three or more times a day. However, the scenario worsened considerably in 2022.

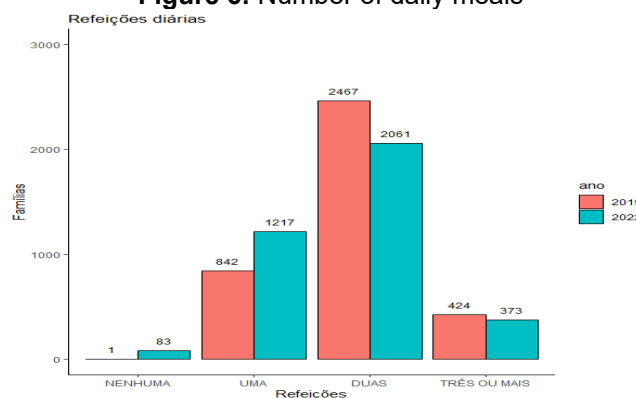
The most recent data (2022) show an alarming growth in the number of families that started to have no daily meal, indicating situations of severe food insecurity. At the same time, there was a substantial increase in families surviving on only one meal a day. This shift reflects not only the lack of physical and economic access to food, but also the impacts of external factors, such as rising prices for essential goods, unemployment, and declining disposable income.

The decline in the number of households that are able to maintain two or more meals a day is a clear indicator that living conditions have deteriorated. The reduction in food frequency directly affects the health and productivity of the population, especially children, who are more vulnerable to malnutrition and diseases associated with a lack of essential nutrients. In addition, decreased access to food may be related to economic crises, instability in the supply of products, and changes in agricultural production patterns.

These data reinforce the conclusion that the cost of living increased significantly for families in Niassa between 2019 and 2022. The increase in the price of basic foodstuffs, combined with the lack of infrastructure and efficient social support policies, aggravates

existing inequalities and exposes the most vulnerable families to even more precarious conditions. To address this situation, it is essential to implement food security programs and interventions aimed at reducing the costs of essential goods and increasing family income.

Figure 6: Number of daily meals



Source: Authors

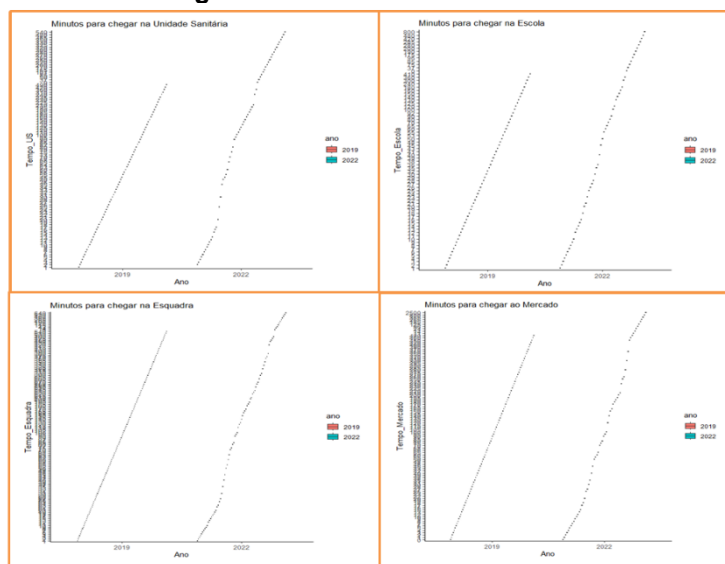
For access to basic services, such as health centres, schools, markets and police stations, it shows a deterioration in conditions between 2019 and 2022. In the graphs in Figure 7, it is observed that in 2022 families reported traveling significantly longer distances and spending more time to access these services compared to 2019. This increase in distances reflects a worsening in the territorial reach and distribution of these essential services.

In the health sector, the longer average distance to health centers is worrying, considering that rapid access to medical care is essential to respond to emergencies and prevent diseases. Similarly, access to education has been impaired, with children and young people facing longer commutes to school, which can increase school dropout, especially in rural areas. These data suggest challenges in maintaining and expanding educational infrastructure, directly affecting efforts to promote social inclusion and development.

Local markets, essential for the supply and informal trade that sustains many families, have also become more distant. This situation not only increases overhead costs for residents, but can also discourage local economic activity. In addition, the greater distance to police stations poses an additional risk to public safety, making it difficult to respond quickly to incidents and limiting the population's access to protective services. These changes indicate possible failures in territorial management and resource allocation during the analyzed period. The deterioration of access to services can be a consequence of factors such as population growth without corresponding expansion of infrastructure,

degradation of access roads, or the displacement of service units to more central locations. These results reinforce the need for public policies that prioritize decentralization and improving connectivity between communities and basic services, especially in rural areas of Niassa Province.

Figure 7: Access to basic services



Source: Authors

CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis of living conditions in Niassa Province between 2019 and 2022 reveals a significant deterioration in several socioeconomic indicators, especially in access to essential services such as health, education, market, drinking water and basic sanitation. A worsening of household housing and food conditions was also observed, reflecting the growing challenges faced in both urban and rural areas. The increase in distances to access services and the greater dependence on natural resources for energy and food indicate a worsening in the general well-being of families, potentially associated with the increase in the cost of living, economic crises and limitations in public development policies.

These results highlight the persistence of structural inequalities between urban and rural areas, with rural communities remaining more vulnerable to adverse changes. The analysis underlines the urgent need for intervention and strategic planning to reverse negative trends and ensure improved living conditions for the population of Niassa Province.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the analysis, the following recommendations are presented for managers and policymakers in Niassa Province:

- (a) **Improving access to essential services:** It is crucial to invest in infrastructure to reduce the distances families travel to access health centers, schools, markets, and police stations. The creation of decentralized units in these services should be prioritized to serve the most distant communities.
- (b) **Strengthening basic sanitation and access to clean water:** Public policies should focus on expanding and improving safe water sources and access to adequate sanitation facilities. The construction of protected wells and the installation of piped water systems in rural areas can reduce the impact of poor water conditions.
- (c) **Promoting food security:** Faced with the increase in households with less access to daily meals, it is necessary to implement programs that improve local agricultural production, expand access to basic foodstuffs, and strengthen social assistance networks for the most vulnerable families.
- (d) **Support for decent housing:** Housing policies that encourage the use of more durable and accessible construction materials should be promoted, in addition to promoting housing credit programs that facilitate the acquisition or renovation of own housing.
- (e) **Adoption of sustainable energy:** Investing in clean and affordable technologies, such as solar systems and biogas, can reduce reliance on traditional sources such as firewood, contributing to environmental sustainability and improved living conditions.
- (f) **Focus on rural development:** Reducing inequalities between urban and rural areas requires specific strategies, such as strengthening the local economy, improving access to education, and promoting training and employment initiatives for rural communities.
- (g) **Continuous monitoring and evaluation:** Policy implementation must be accompanied by robust monitoring and evaluation systems in order to identify progress, correct gaps, and ensure that interventions are aligned with the real needs of the population.

LIMITATIONS

Despite the relevance of the results presented, this study has some limitations that should be considered. First, the data used come from samples carried out in two specific periods (2019 and 2022), which limits the analysis to these times and may not fully capture seasonal variations or other temporal factors that impact the living conditions of families.

In addition, the reliance on secondary data restricts the ability to explore qualitative and subjective issues that could enrich the understanding of the challenges faced by families. Factors such as perceptions about the quality of public services, the impact of local policies, and the resilience of communities were not analyzed in depth, which could offer a more comprehensive picture.

Another limitation refers to the representativeness of the sample in relation to the most remote communities. In rural areas that are difficult to access, there may be underrepresentation of families facing even more precarious conditions, which could lead to an underestimation of existing defiance.

Finally, the analysis did not address external factors, such as climate change, national or global economic crises, or even unforeseen events, which may have influenced the living conditions of families. These factors could be explored in future studies to broaden the understanding of socioeconomic determinants in the Province.

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