Review of the Ethiopian Nutrition Policy Landscape 2010 – 2020

THE PROBLEM

In recent years, Ethiopia's greatest nutrition challenge has been a high burden of undernutrition. However, overweight and obesity rates are increasing, particularly in urban areas. Ethiopia has a rich nutrition policy landscape with the second National Nutrition Programme (NNP) 2016–2020 and the 2019 National Food and Nutrition Policy playing a central role in addressing multiple nutrition issues. However, despite a broadened focus and multisectoral involvement, policy outputs still seem to focus more on undernutrition than on all forms of malnutrition.

METHODOLOGY

The policy review used the policy integration framework (*Candel and Biesbroek 2016*) which has four dimensions: policy framework, sector involvement, policy goals and policy instruments (information, legal, financial, or organizational).
Documents selected for the review included policy documents responding to the following criteria:

- Publication date from 2010
- Published and endorsed by at least one NNP signatory ministry
- Food or nutrition as part of objectives, actions or recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

1. *Overview of documents*

- 131 documents reviewed of which 73 documents included policy outputs (policies, strategies, plans, programs etc.,)
- Most policy outputs were from the health sector (18), followed by multisectoral outputs (10) issued by the federal government and the Ministry of Agriculture (8)

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- Most were published in 2016 (15 documents) and 2017 (11 documents).

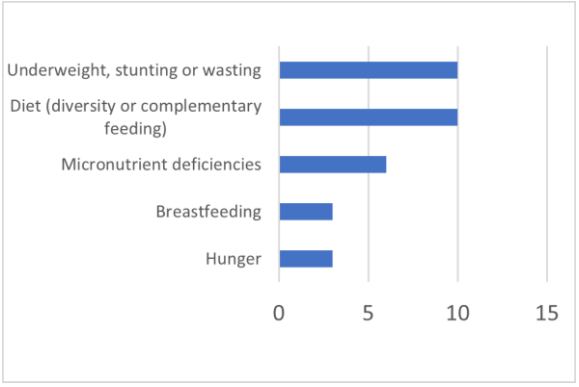
2. *Contributing sectors of policy documents:*

- 32 documents listed government sectors.
- 35 documents listed UN or NGOs.
- 15 documents listed bilateral and multilateral donors.

3. *Objectives of policy documents:*

- Most objectives were specifically related to undernutrition or diets. Only 3 objectives referred to breastfeeding or hunger (Figure 1).
- Policy objectives most often addressed children or infants. Fewer objectives included women of reproductive age or adolescents.

Figure 1: Number of objectives related to types of malnutrition and immediate causes



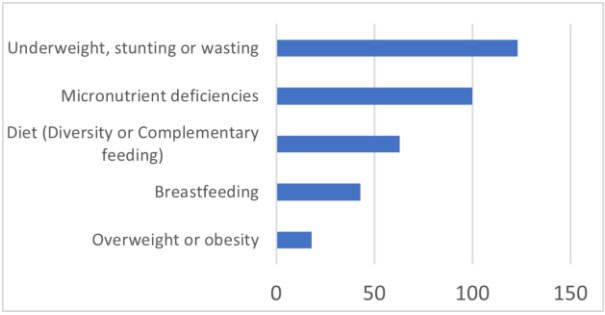
4. *Policy instruments proposed in policy documents:*

- Information instruments: provision of information in the form of nutrition education and SBCC to general population as well as trainings and capacity building for health or agriculture extension workers or teachers.
- Legal instruments: already endorsed to protect breastfeeding, ensure food safety, and support food fortification. Policy documents called for enforcement while proposing new regulations to encourage consumption of healthy food and discourage consumption of unhealthy food.
- Financial instruments: providing access to financial support, direct support with cash through social protection programs (food for work/cash for work), feeding programs through schools or humanitarian interventions, micronutrient supplements, and agricultural inputs. Taxes on unhealthy foods and drinks have already been put in place.
- Organizational instruments: improving existing institutions, mechanisms, and services. Establishment of new coordination structures for multisectoral and vertical coordination.

5. *Evidence based policy making:*

- Most policy documents provided some references to publications with the majority of the evidence from Ethiopia.
- Documents from the health sector or prepared by multiple sectors used the global evidence (UN reports, guidelines, GNR, Lancet series).
- The larger part of the evidence was related to undernutrition of children under 5 years (Figure 2).
- Almost all of the policy documents used data on children < 5 years of age and women of reproductive age.
- Food production evidence was mostly presented in terms of what types of crops were produced.
- Determinants related to gender and women empowerment were mentioned in only a few policy documents.

Figure 2: Number of References for Different Types of Malnutrition and Immediate Causes



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations for policy development

- Consider all forms of malnutrition simultaneously and not in isolation.
- More long-term integration of nutrition to obtain or maintain political will for nutrition-sensitive approaches.
- Gender issues need more than a mention in documents, but also long-term action.
- Using the right mix of policy instruments to address nutrition more broadly.
- Tailoring existing instruments more toward improving nutrition to leverage existing efforts.

2. Recommendations specific to evidence-based policy making

- Producing syntheses of existing evidence from Ethiopia and dissemination events with concrete and simple advocacy messages tailored to policymakers.
- Research on effectiveness of interventions in the local context.
- Linking policymaking with evidence requires communication skills and efforts to engage in policy dialogue.

FURTHER INFORMATION : The manuscript from which information for this brief was drawn from is available on the NIPN website (http://www.nipn.ephi.gov.et/).

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