



# Policy Brief: Food System and Nutrition Council Establishment

## Background:

Ethiopia remains among the countries in the world with the highest rates of under-nutrition among under 5 children, despite economic growth progress. According to the recent EPHI 2023, study shows that all forms of malnutrition remains the major public health concern and a multi-faceted development problems that unable under-five children to strive and thrive into their full potential. Among under-five children, 39% stunted, 22% under-weighted and 11% wasted in Ethiopia. Multidimensional poverty & food insecurity, lack of access to safe & clean water, poor sanitation conditions and unsafe hygiene practices continue to be major root causes to overcome under-nutrition in the country. Equally, lack of effective multi-sectoral coordination and governance system, and lack of accountability mechanism among implementing sectors in terms of joint planning, budgeting, implementing & monitoring, which played a significant role for high prevalence of under-nutrition and negatively affected nutritional status of under five children. Such intertwined issue needs bold government actions to address the root causes in policies and programs, despite recognizing the problem and effects of under-nutrition.

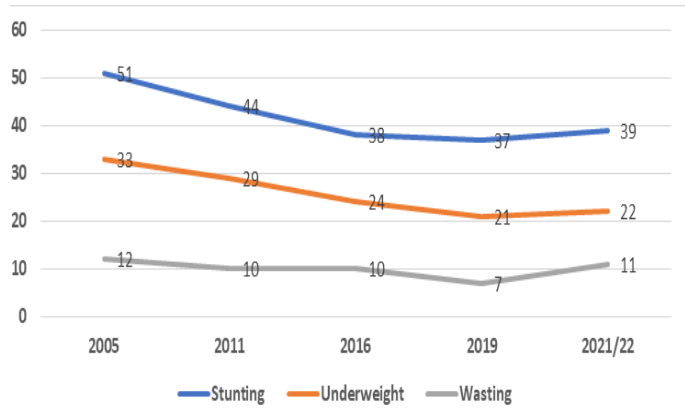


Figure 1: Burdens and trends of under-nutrition in Ethiopia (source: EDHS 2019 & EPHI 2023)

## Policy Issue:

The government of Ethiopia recognized that addressing all forms of malnutrition requires a multi-sectoral efforts and bold actions to put in policies, programs and systems. One of the strategic direction of endorsed food and nutrition policy (FNP 2018) is to establish and strengthen food and nutrition council that govern and coordinate the multi- sectoral coordination and governance system at all level. This in turn shall give due emphasis to the nutrition council establishment which provide strategic leadership and decision with required authority, accountability and ownership for effective multi-sectoral coordination, sustainable financing system & ensure accountability mechanism towards the overall implementation of food and nutrition strategy, Sekota declaration program and food system transformation road-map.

Despite all the progress efforts made after the endorsement of FNP 2018, the establishment of food system and nutrition council underwent through several steps and has been put on hold due to legal gaps. The current Ethiopian laws make no provisions for the council establishment, upon which the mother law must be presented. Furthermore, this in turn demands policy recommendations either policy solutions and/or policy options through influencing key decision makers, legal expertise and other partners for informed decision making towards nutrition council establishment legislative framework i.e. proclamation. Unless timely actions taken to address the current & future concerns, under-nutrition affects the social, economic, health and political aspects of people’s lives. This is exactly where ours policy dialogue is initiated to convince decision makers for the council establishment with possible recommendations.

## Context analysis:

Over the past decades, the Government of Ethiopia has prioritized nutrition and demonstrated its political commitment through designing and implementing various programs, policies and strategies towards addressing undernutrition in all its forms. In 2015, the Government of Ethiopia launched the Seqota declaration in which a bold commitment declared to end malnutrition by 2030. In this policy environment, nutrition is approached as a multi-sectoral issue that requires strategic focus, interventions and commitments in all multi-sectors and a joint plan that is "owned by all". Multi-sectoral coordination efforts in Ethiopia involves the collaboration and coordination of various government sectors and other partners to address the multifaceted challenges of food insecurity and reduce malnutrition through integrating nutrition sensitive interventions across different sectors and institutions, which leading to comprehensive and sustainable nutrition outcomes. Although there is a political commitment to tackle undernutrition, Ethiopia has loses about 16.5% of its GDP per year due to stunting, 28% of all child mortality is associated with undernutrition (COHA 2009).

Furthermore, in 2018 the Government of Ethiopia for the first time endorsed food and nutrition policy (FNP 2018) with aimed to provide a policy framework in addressing the immediate, underlying and basic causes of malnutrition through establishing and strengthening food and nutrition governing body and institutional structures at all level. The policy entails that food and nutrition security is a human and constitutional right of all citizens to have the right to get nutritious, affordable and safe food in a sufficient quantity and quality at all times to attain optimal nutritional status. Moreover, the country has accepted and adopted many global and regional commitments, declarations and treaties to ensure the food and nutrition security of its citizens at all possible. To govern and coordinate the multi-sectoral coordination efforts and resource allocation, the government established governance platforms of nutrition coordination body (NCB) and nutrition technical committee (NTC). However, these governance platforms lacks legal enforcement. The absence of legal framework among multi- sectors brings lack of accountability mechanism; sustainable financing and governance system that made the attainment of food and nutrition security lag behind from what was expected.

## Approach:

As one of its policy advocacy approach, Right2Grow Ethiopia observed that there is a policy implementation gaps towards effective multi-sectoral coordination and governance system to address undernutrition in jointly and effectively manner. Furthermore, this needs to lobbying and influencing government officials and other development actors to strengthen multi-sectoral coordination Such a dialogue offers us the opportunities to really prioritise a joint roadmap forward.

efforts and governance structures for food and nutrition policy implementation at all level. Accordingly, Right2Grow Ethiopia, led by World Vision Ethiopia as a national consortium lead, had continued discussions and strategic approach with nutrition coordination office of Ministry of Health on how to speed up the establishment of food system and nutrition council, which mandated to provide overall leadership for the implementation of food and nutrition strategy, sekota declaration commitment and food system roadmap. As a result, World Vision Ethiopia has organized and facilitated a national policy dialogue in collaboration with Ministry of Health on December 12, 2023 at Addis Ababa.

## Purpose:

The main purpose of this policy dialogues to influence key decision makers and generate policy recommendation for the draft proclamation of food system and nutrition council establishment. The dialogue intended to facilitate and enable inclusive dialogue and amplify community voices in the presence of decision makers and partners to raise issues, share perspectives and propose possible solutions on how to speed up the council establishment. Besides facilitating effective discussions, this policy dialogue also expected to p roduce policy recommendations from concur policy solutions and possible options for the draft proclamation of food system and nutrition council establishment.

## Main Policy Dialogue Findings:

Policy dialogue points and main discussions aimed to comprehend reasons behind why the council establishment delayed, identify legal gaps and its potential procedures in the current country provisions, amplify the role of civic engagement in the council establishment, provide policy recommendation for draft proclamation write up and set follow up mechanisms to speed up the establishment of food system and nutrition council at national level. As a result, with the presentation of four policy dialogue papers, an interactive and inclusive dialogue has undertaken in the presence of key government policy makers (includes Legal Director General from Prime minister office, Lead Executive Nutrition coordination office from Ministry of Health and Senior legal expert from Ministry of Justice), civil society leaders, legal expertise, researchers, academicians, media institutions, private sectors, embassies, donors and UN agencies. Among few of participants, key government ministries, ECSC-SUN, GAIN, IFPRI, FHI360, WHO, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, EKN, USAID etc. Furthermore, presented dialogue papers and undertaken inclusive dialogue has comprehend the policy implementation gaps with existing facts, actions and procedures pertaining to the council establishment with course of actions to be considered and possible recommendations, which demands the decisions and actions of policy makers and public officials for speed up the establishment of food system and nutrition council. Accordingly, from the framed dialogue paper presentations, key dialogue points and participant discussions, the main policy dialogue findings were summarized as follows.

## a) Current Progress

Since 2008, the government of Ethiopia is carrying out different programs and initiatives towards food and nutrition security including Yelimat Turufat, Green Legacy, Fruit Tree... etc. These initiatives aim to ensure food and nutrition security as a human and constitutional right for all citizens through developing and implementing multi-sectoral approach. To coordinate such multidimensional efforts, the government established nutrition coordination body (NCB) and nutrition technical committee (NTC). However, key challenges associated with multi-sectoral coordination and governance platforms are too complex and not mainstreamed at all levels. Among these, (1) lack of legal ground and unable to enforce implementing multi-sectors and other partners to discharge their full roles and responsibilities; (2) lack of accountability mechanism among implementing multi-sectors in terms of joint planning, budgeting, implementing and monitoring; (3) absence of institutional arrangement and governance structures to ensure sustainable financing and ownership; (4) lack of effective multi-sectoral coordination at vertical and horizontal leadership linkage; (5) insufficient stakeholder engagement among sectors and partners to align efforts and resources for the coverage of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions towards addressing undernutrition at all levels.

Following the endorsement of food and nutrition policy in 2018, the government provides directions to reinforce the current nutrition coordination and governance structures through establishing food system and nutrition council with the mandate to provide leadership and strategic directions. Furthermore, the government aims to have one coordination and governance system to ensure multi-sectors ownership, sustainable financing, governance system and accountability mechanism for the implementation of food and nutrition strategy, sekota declaration program and food system transformation roadmap. Ultimately, the establishment of food system and nutrition council (FSNC) has been attempted although the desired outcomes have not been realized due to various procedures and priorities.

## b) Legal Aspects

As clearly stipulated in the food and nutrition policy (2018), the Government of Ethiopia will establish and functionalize legal framework for successful and joint planning, coordinating, implementing and monitoring across multiple sectors and partners to address all forms of malnutrition. To realize these into effect, the existing laws shall be revised, new laws, proclamations, regulations and guidelines shall be promulgated in line with international and national laws and regulations to ensure food and nutrition security.

Despite all progress efforts made so far to establish the appropriate and authorized multisectoral and governance, the process of establishing food system and nutrition council went through many steps and have been delayed due to legal gaps. The current Ethiopian laws don't have provisions (ድንጋጌዎች) for the council establishment, Proclamation No.1263/2021 that provides the power and duties of executive organs, rather than certain institutes and entities unless upon which the mother law must be presented that provide provision. To address the legal provision gaps, conduct legal assessment to identify critical legal procedures and generate adequate evidence for the provision of legal background towards the council establishment. Because of the current FNP 2018 has endorsed with the repealed laws (የተሻሩ ሕጎች), proclamation No.1097/2018 (sub article 4) that allows council establishment under the powers and duties of executive organs. Accordingly, joint taskforce established within different experienced expertise and researchers, which includes nutrition expertise from Ministry of Health, food expertise from Ministry of Agriculture, legal expertise from Ministry of Justice and other expertise from Right2Grow and CSOs representatives to undertake legal gap analysis and provide enough evidence to convince policy makers for the adoption of legal provisions for council establishment through proclamation rather than Proclamation No.1097/2018 article 103.

Furthermore, nutrition scattered at different implementing government sectors with its unequal distributed resources. This needs institutional arrangement and governance system that brings together the coordination efforts and oversees the overall integrated operations across sectors through established food system and nutrition council agency and/or secretariat office. Only council establishment is not enough because the council might be assembled bi-annual or once a year for leadership decisions and strategic directions. Although the government shows reluctance to establish its pledged secretariat office, such multi-dimensional nature and multi-sectoral coordination needs separate agency to achieve the intention of policy implementation through effective coordination of day-to-day operations across sectors at all levels.

## c) Civic Engagement

Although the council establishment has not been realized, the current proposal shows that only public institutions should be council members with required authorities, responsibilities and accountability for leadership decisions and strategic directions i.e. 15 government sectors, 2 commissions and 4 authority. However, learning experience from Brazil success shows that, CSOs and private sectors comprises 2/3 in the council members whereas 1/3 from public government at all levels for effective public policies and active civic engagement for championing the public issues.

This implies the role of civil society and private sectors participations and meaningful engagement is paramount towards achieved zero hunger strategy and removed Brazil from the hunger map by 2014. Because civil society and private sectors have roles and responsibility to contribute for joint efforts and joint actions across multiple sectors including local communities, civil society and private sector are considered the critical procedures in making decisions, implementing policies and measuring outcomes to address all forms of malnutrition.

To ensure meaningful civic engagement and institutionalize public concerns, it requires the representations of civil societies (CSOs) and private sectors in the food system and nutrition council members so that they can amplify community voices and public concerns in decisions and accountability mechanism. This needs to widen existing platform and create inclusive council space for civic participation and stakeholder engagement in the process of establishing and functionalizing food system and nutrition council for collective envisioned nutrition outcomes i.e. such proposing possible solutions and influencing government decisions on making inclusive council space for the first time is one of the most outcome harvesting of this policy dialogue.

## Policy Recommendations

### 1 Legal Assessment

Conduct legal assessment and provide draft legal provision for food system and nutrition council establishment to bring this into reality, under the leadership of Ministry of Health through establishing joint taskforce and/or revisiting existing working groups that combines from different background like nutritionist, legal experts, researchers and civil society with clearly defined TOR and timeframe to undertake the legal gap analysis and draft proclamation to speed up the council establishment.

### 2 Inclusive Council Space

Create inclusive council space for civil society and private sector representations in the food system and nutrition council through widening civic space to ensure civic engagement so that they can amplify community voices and share public concerns in policy decisions, budget allocations and accountability mechanism i.e. recognize the roles and contributions of civil society and private sector towards addressing food security and nutrition outcomes in political, social and economic aspects.

## References

- *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Food and Nutrition Policy, 2018*
- *Ethiopia Public Health Institute Food and Nutrition Survey Baseline Survey Preliminary findings, 2023*
- *The Seqota Declaration commitment (2015) to end malnutrition by 2030 (Gebru, Remans, and Brouwer 2018)*
- *FINAL Ethiopia - Cost of Hunger in Africa – COHA Summary Report June 2013.pdf*
- *Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey, 2019*
- *The National Nutrition Programme (NNP), first launched in 2009 (NNPI) and 2nd NNP II that emphasis the multisectoral approach to address undernutrition, 2025, which managed by the Ministry of Health (MoH)*
- *Brazil's experience of building a FN security system and removed from UN World Food Hunger Map by 2014*
- *A Proclamation No.1263/2021 to provide definition for the Powers and Duties of the Executive Organs of the Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia; January 25, 2022*

### Acknowledgments:

We gratefully acknowledge the Ministry of Health, Prime Minister Office, other key Government Ministries, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Private Sectors, Donors, Embassies, UN Agencies and Right2Grow Consortium for strategic collaboration and significant contributions; this would not be possible without your collaboration!

### Right2Grow Consortium

#### Primary Partners:

**Action Against Hunger | CEGAA | Max Foundation | Save the Children | The Hunger Project | World Vision**

#### Local CSOs:

**MCMDO, ORDA and GDCA**

#### Donor:

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands**

### Further Information

**Website:** <https://www.right2grow.org/ethiopia>

