

Renewing Commitment and Accelerating Action: Enhancing Ethiopia's Nutrition Strategy to Meet the Tokyo N4G Summit Goals

Introduction:

Nutrition is critical for sustainable development, especially in countries like Ethiopia, where malnutrition severely impacts health and economic growth. At the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit, Ethiopia made key commitments to reduce childhood stunting and wasting, improve maternal nutrition, and enhance food security. These commitments are part of a global effort to boost health and economic outcomes. This paper evaluates Ethiopia's progress and challenges in meeting its N4G targets, advocating for renewed efforts and strategic adjustments to achieve these goals and contribute to sustainable

Background:

Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous nation with over 109 million people, faces persistent and severe nutritional challenges that hinder child survival and national development. Among children under five, 39% are stunted, and 11% suffer from acute malnutrition. Additionally, 22% of women of reproductive age are undernourished, increasing the risk of low birth weight and poor health outcomes for their children. Widespread micronutrient deficiencies, such as high anemia rates among both children and mothers, exacerbate the situation. Contributing factors include early childbearing, poor sanitation, limited access to clean drinking water, and low maternal education. Currently, only about a third of the rural population has access to basic drinking water, and just 7% of households benefit from basic sanitation services.

In response, Ethiopia has implemented several strategies aimed at combating malnutrition, with a particular emphasis on its commitments made at the 2021 Tokyo N4G Summit. These commitments build upon previous pledges made during the 2013 London N4G Summit and focus on reducing stunting and wasting in children, improving maternal nutrition, and strengthening food security and resilience in response to crises such as droughts and conflicts. The Tokyo Summit provided Ethiopia with a renewed platform to reaffirm its dedication to these critical nutrition goals and to mobilize the necessary resources and partnerships for their achievement. Ethiopia's key N4G commitments include:

Financial Commitments: Since 2013, Ethiopia has pledged \$15 million annually to improve national nutrition, with a continued focus on increasing this investment in the years following the 2021 Tokyo Summit.

Impact Commitments: Ethiopia has set ambitious targets for reducing stunting and wasting in children, particularly through enhanced maternal and child health programs, improved access to nutrient-rich foods, and greater resilience to socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Policy and Program Commitments: Ethiopia has committed to strengthening multi-sectoral coordination by integrating health, agriculture, and education sectors. The goal is to scale up nutrition-sensitive interventions across the country, particularly in vulnerable regions like Afar, Amhara, Somali, and South Ethiopia.

Renewed Commitments: At the 2021 Tokyo N4G Summit, Ethiopia renewed its focus on reducing childhood stunting and wasting, improving maternal nutrition, and addressing the growing challenges of climate change, droughts, and conflict-driven food insecurity. These efforts were aligned with the country's broader goals of achieving food security and contributing to sustainable development ([Tokyo N4G commitments](#)).

Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist. Regional disparities, especially in conflict-affected and drought-prone areas, continue to worsen food insecurity and malnutrition. Regions like Afar, Amhara, and Somali show high rates of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) among children, highlighting the need for more comprehensive interventions. Additionally, insufficient coverage of nutrition programs, weak governance structures, and limited resources hinder progress. Regions such as Tigray, Oromia, Amhara, and the former SNNPRS face chronic malnutrition issues.

The **Seqota Declaration**, launched in 2015, continues to serve as a guiding framework for Ethiopia's long-term vision to eliminate stunting by 2030. However, to meet the ambitious goals set at the 2021 Tokyo Summit, Ethiopia must address key barriers, such as inadequate program implementation, weak infrastructure, and the need for sustained investment from both domestic and international partners.

This position paper aims to assess Ethiopia's progress and challenges in achieving its N4G commitments and advocate for renewed efforts and strategic adjustments to accelerate progress. By enhancing multi-sectoral coordination, increasing investment in nutrition-sensitive interventions, and integrating lessons from recent developments, Ethiopia can build a resilient foundation for sustainable development, ensuring the health and well-being of its children and future generations.

Problem Statement

Despite Ethiopia's commitments at the 2021 Tokyo N4G Summit, malnutrition remains a critical public health challenge that impedes sustainable development. The country has achieved some progress in exclusive breastfeeding and anemia reduction. However, goals related to reducing wasting and stunting, addressing overweight issues, and improving low birth weight tracking are lagging, with the latter remaining inadequately addressed.

Since 2018, external challenges including climate-related disasters, disease outbreaks, COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts have shifted focus from developmental to crisis response, exacerbating food insecurity and nutritional deficits. Additionally, global economic strains have increased food prices, further impacting nutritional status across the population. Policy initiatives like the food and nutrition policy and strategy, Seqota Declaration and the Food System Roadmap have been endorsed but face significant implementation barriers, including:

<p>Ineffective multi-sectoral coordination and Accountability:</p> <p>Due to lack of governance structure and mechanisms to account the Food and Nutrition policy signatory sectors.</p>	<p>Limited Private Sector Engagement:</p> <p>A gap in collaboration between the government, the private sector and civil society has led to diminished policy effectiveness. This lack of cooperative engagement limits the scope and impact of initiatives, restricting both resource mobilization and innovation essential for successful policy outcomes.</p>
<p>Inadequate Public Budget Allocation:</p> <p>Insufficient funding and challenges in expenditure monitoring.</p>	<p>Rising Vulnerabilities:</p> <p>Increased food insecurity and malnutrition risks, particularly among marginalized groups.</p>
<p>Silos implementation for interlinked Humanitarian, Development, and Peace challenges:</p> <p>Poor integration among humanitarian, development, and peace [HDP] efforts, reducing their collective impact and affects the contribution of the FNP and Seqota declaration roadmap on the N4G commitments. The concept of HDP triple nexus represents a new way of working that has yet to be implemented in Ethiopia through standardized guidelines and a roadmap. Consequently, the lack of collaboration and complementarity among humanitarian, development, and peace interventions has diminished the overall impact of efforts by the government and other actors in reducing risks and vulnerabilities in crisis-affected communities. As a result, the N4G commitments, nutritional goals, were not adequately achieved.</p>	<p>Security and Peacebuilding Challenges:</p> <p>Persistent conflicts disrupt development and humanitarian efforts, while peacebuilding remains isolated and under-prioritized.</p>

These interconnected challenges hinder the effective translation of national policies into actionable outcomes, making it imperative to advocate for renewed efforts and strategic adjustments to meet the N4G goals and enhance Ethiopia's trajectory towards sustainable development.



Hibo, a MODAM research officer in Gode, assesses Munasar Abdi's MUAC at Cilaan Health Center. His MUAC measurement is 12.7cm, which is in the healthy range.

Position and Rationale

Ethiopia's Tokyo N4G commitments represent a crucial opportunity to tackle malnutrition, but achieving these goals requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach. **We advocate for:**

Establishment of Accountability Mechanisms and strengthen the multi-sectoral coordination:

1 Establish accountability mechanisms among policy signatory sectors to ensure effective implementation of the food and nutrition policy and strategy, and the SD and food system roadmap in a multi-sectoral approach and achieve the commitments made at the Tokyo N4G Summit 2021. Accountability is crucial to ensure multisectoral coordination and to guarantee that policies are effectively implemented, and the goals set at the N4G Summit are achieved.

Engagement of the Private Sector and Civil Society:

2 Foster an environment that encourages meaningful participation of the private sector and civil society in implementing the N4G Summit commitments, enhancing sustainable development and improving the food system. Private sector and civil society involvement can enhance resource mobilization, spur innovation, and improve execution efficiency, which are vital for the success of the strategies derived from the N4G commitments.

Adopt the triple nexus approach to address the interlinked HDP challenges:

3 Adopt an innovative and new way of working approach to manage shocks, reduce risks, and build resilience in crisis-affected populations, aligning with the N4G Summit's resilience goals. Ensure Federal and Regional Food System and Nutrition (FSN) councils implement the Triple Nexus model (Humanitarian, Development, and Peace) to address food and nutrition crises. Integrating HDP nexus programming will streamline resources and enhance responses to food insecurity and malnutrition, supporting N4G strategies. These innovative methods are crucial for tackling food insecurity and malnutrition in crisis areas, contributing to the sustainability of N4G commitments through local solutions, and collaborative and complementing HDP interventions.

Speed up the establishment of the Food Systems and Nutrition Council:

4 Seek the endorsement of the Prime Minister's Office for the establishment of the Federal Food System and Nutrition Council, to ensure accountability for the allocated budget towards nutrition outcomes and mainstream multisectoral coordination. An official endorsement will solidify the accountability structures, ensuring a focused and coordinated effort across sectors to meet N4G goals.

Pooled Nutrition Funding:

5 Advocate for the Ministry and Bureau of Finance to create ONE nutrition account and nutrition budget line to pool sectoral budgets allocated for nutrition, monitoring, and tracking expenditures against the intended goals. ONE account funding mechanism will ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency in utilizing funds allocated for nutrition, crucial for fulfilling N4G commitments.

Flexible Funding by Donors:

6 Encourage donors to adapt their funding schemes to include HDP triple nexus programming, providing flexible and sufficient funding to address the immediate and structural challenges faced by crisis-affected populations. Flexible funding is essential for adaptable and responsive programming, allowing better addressing of the evolving challenges faced by crisis-affected populations.

Ethiopia's Recommendations towards N4G Summit 2025

1 Endorsement of the FSN Council:

Secure the endorsement of the Federal Food System and Nutrition (FSN) Council by the Prime Minister's Office to ensure accountability for budget allocations towards nutrition outcomes and enhance multi-sectoral coordination at all levels.

2 Creation of a Centralized Nutrition Account:

Establish a single, centralized nutrition account by the Ministry and Bureau of Finance to pool sectoral budgets dedicated to nutrition. This account should be used to monitor and track expenditures against intended nutrition goals, ensuring transparency and accountability.

3 Engagement of Private and Public Sectors, and Civil Society:

Create a conducive environment for the active participation of relevant actors, including the private sector and civil society, in implementing the N4G Summit commitments.

4 Adopt the HDP triple nexus Programming

Adopt the new way of working approach to address the interlinked HDP challenges to reduce risks and vulnerabilities and build resilience among crisis affected population. This includes making the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) triple nexus a central priority within the Federal and Regional Food System and Nutrition (FSN) councils, while coordinating efforts with the National Disaster and Risk Management Commission and the Ministry of Peace.

5 Flexible Donor Funding:

Modify donor funding schemes to include flexible provisions that support HDP triple nexus programming, addressing both immediate and structural challenges faced by crisis-affected populations.

6 Fix Policy Implementation gaps in time:

Address structural, financial, and accountability gaps that have hindered the effective implementation of the N4G commitments, enhancing the overall policy effectiveness and achieving outlined goals.

7 Strengthen Data Quality Management Systems:

The government should prioritize enhancing data quality management at all levels to ensure the effective implementation of nutrition and multi-sectoral initiatives. While adopting tools like the Unified Nutrition Information System for Ethiopia (UNISE) and Real-Time Performance Monitoring (RTPM) is important, ensuring accuracy, reliability, and consistency in data collection and analysis is crucial. High-quality data is key for informed decision-making, timely interventions, and sustained progress in nutrition and related sectors.

8 Establish an Interim Committee for Oversight of Commitment Implementation:

The government should establish an interim committee to oversee the implementation of its commitments related to nutrition and multi-sectoral initiatives. This committee will be responsible for coordinating efforts across relevant sectors, monitoring progress, and ensuring accountability. A dedicated oversight body will help drive effective implementation, address challenges, and ensure that commitments are met in a timely and efficient manner.

These recommendations aim to bridge the gaps in policy implementation and structural arrangements that have impeded progress in combating malnutrition in Ethiopia, furthering the nation's commitments made at the Tokyo N4G Summit.

Call for Action

We urge the Ethiopian government, development partners, and civil society organizations to prioritize the implementation of the Tokyo N4G commitments. By working together, we can ensure that all Ethiopians, especially the most vulnerable, have access to the nutrition they need to thrive.

Conclusion

Ethiopia's commitments to N4G initiative represent a critical opportunity to address malnutrition and improve the health and well-being of its population. By increasing investment, strengthening coordination, and focusing on vulnerable populations, Ethiopia can make significant progress towards ending malnutrition and achieving its development goals. The time to act is now.



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