



**Self Help
Africa**

NUTRITION IN AGRICULTURE

PROGRAMMING



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– Nutrition Training Centre, Ethiopia



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THE CHALLENGE

A deteriorating food and nutrition security situation globally affecting more severely Sub-Saharan Africa

Over the last two decades there have been significant improvements in reducing hunger and malnutrition worldwide. However, more than 820 million people in the world are still hungry today, underscoring the immense challenge of achieving the Zero Hunger target by 2030.

Hunger is on the rise in almost all African subregions, making Africa the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, at almost 20 percent. One in seven newborns, or 20.5 million babies globally, suffered from low birthweight in 2015. No progress has been made in reducing low birthweight since 2012. By contrast, the number of children under 5 years in the world affected by stunting has decreased by 10 percent in the past six years. However, with 149 million children still stunted, the pace of progress is too slow to meet the 2030 target of halving the number of stunted children¹.

Stunting in children under 2 years increases the risk of morbidity, and these children are more likely to develop poor cognitive skills and learning abilities later in childhood which may affect labour productivity and ultimately economic development of entire communities and countries.

In order to address chronic hunger and malnutrition **a multi-sectoral approach is required**. Agriculture is the cornerstone to success. However, increasing production alone is insufficient. A nutrition-sensitive approach to agriculture is what is required, with clear linkages established with other sectors, such as health and WaSH (water, sanitation and hygiene promotion). This will accelerate progress in improving **nutrition** by enhancing the household and community environment in which children develop and grow, and by increasing the effectiveness, coverage, and scale of nutrition-specific interventions.

¹ See FAO, The State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World 2019.

What are we committed to?

IN SHA

In **Embracing Change - SHA's Strategic Plan 2017–2021** SHA is committed to *improving food and nutrition security by helping to create sustainable income for smallholder farmers* as a key strategic objective. In particular, the plan states: *We address hunger and chronic malnutrition by taking a nutrition-sensitive approach to all our interventions, ensuring household food and nutrition security is prioritised through measuring indicators such as reductions in the hunger period and increased dietary diversity.*

In order to ensure a positive impact on both food and nutrition security, it is essential that nutrition be a core component of all our agriculture and enterprise programmes. Smallholder farmer families need to understand the importance of good nutrition for health and wellbeing. Healthy productive families have access to better livelihoods opportunities and are more likely to be lifted out of poverty.

IN IRELAND

A Better World – Ireland's Policy for International Development, recognises the severity of the challenges facing the world today in relation to hunger and malnutrition and commits to *scaling up support to a wide range of nutrition interventions across both development and emergency responses, with a particular focus on the prevention and treatment of child under-nutrition*. In particular, under the second cluster of interventions – Food – we note a commitment to *refreshing the approach to hunger and undernutrition within sustainable food systems*.

INTERNATIONALLY

SHA's support for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture will contribute to at least two Sustainable Development Goals

ZERO HUNGER

- By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.
- By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.
- By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural



practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

- By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all and achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
- By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.



Our Value Proposition

Contribute to the improvement of food and nutrition security through the promotion of diversified and sustainable diets within equitable food systems.

Core focus: SHA's core focus in the areas of nutrition is on interventions to address malnutrition in all its forms (current emphasis on undernutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies).

In SHA we look at the reduction of hunger and malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive interventions within all of our agriculture programming. Where opportunities arise, nutrition-specific components are also included.

Our key differentiator is the **Community Integration of Nutrition within Agriculture Programmes (CINAP) approach** which is based on a comprehensive multisectoral framework bringing together nutrition, agriculture, water and sanitation, gender, and enterprise.

What does Nutrition within Agriculture mean to us?

FAO defines Nutrition-Sensitive agriculture as:

1. A food-based approach to agricultural development that puts nutritionally rich foods, dietary diversity, and food fortification at the heart of overcoming malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.
2. This approach stresses the multiple benefits derived from enjoying a variety of foods, recognizing the nutritional value of food for good nutrition, and the importance and social significance of the food and agricultural sector for supporting rural livelihoods.
3. The overall objective of nutrition-sensitive agriculture is to make the global food system better equipped to produce good nutritional outcomes

In addition to these criteria SHA is committed to ensuring that nutrition within agriculture incorporates the following:

- a. In-depth context analysis to ensure that interventions are appropriate and respond to local needs
- b. Training/knowledge transfer on basic nutrition, food utilization, preservation and storage to improve nutrition outcomes
- c. Working closely with relevant line ministries, including Health, Agriculture and Local Government which allows for a more comprehensive lens to be used in approaching nutrition needs and contributing to long-term sustainability and impact
- d. Working closely with Nutrition Coordinating Committees at national, district, and sub district level
- e. When nutrition-specific training is part of a programme, targeting the nutrition and health needs of vulnerable groups, specifically with a focus on pregnant/lactating women and young children, linking strongly with community health centres
- f. Promoting best practices on basic WaSH practices at individual, household and community levels in collaboration with relevant stakeholders (government, NGOs, etc.)
- g. Promoting gender sensitisation within households and communities
- h. Enhancing knowledge transfer using diverse and creative methods such as developing local recipes, cooking demonstrations, mapping of the food availability calendar at community level, role play



Left to right, Desinesh Kibru, Hikrem Edilu, Tiringo Tsessa, Ethiopia

OUR FOCUS

SHA believes that incorporating nutrition interventions within all its projects/programmes can bring about substantial improvements in food and nutrition security. The combination of improved access to and availability of more diverse nutritious food through agricultural interventions, together with better knowledge of the importance of a well-balanced diet, food harvesting, preservation, storage and utilisation, will contribute to behavioural change, leading to improved practices and ultimately impacting on better nutrition and health.

Throughout the project cycle nutrition features as a core element of SHA's programming; from proposal development, to budgeting, implementation and monitoring - with specific tools developed for capturing nutrition data at outcome and impact levels.

In the countries in which SHA is working, there is a high burden of malnutrition. Within these countries there are huge variations in the levels of chronic malnutrition (stunting) in children under 5 years, with rural agricultural communities being the most adversely affected. It is ironic that where the most food is being produced is where food insecurity and malnutrition coexist. High levels of chronic malnutrition in young children is a marker for chronic food insecurity and poverty at community level.

At the core of the programmes in which we have a nutrition component in place, we work to improve dietary diversity at household level through a combination of improved access, availability and knowledge on nutrition. Furthermore, a basic element of water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WaSH) is incorporated within the programmes, as good health is also essential for good nutrition. Supporting the improvement of markets is another key element in enhancing beneficiaries' access to increased resources to meet all the other demands within the household.

Rosemary Chate with her daughter, Malela Village, Luwingu, Zambia



How to Start

In order to ensure that all agriculture interventions are nutrition-sensitive, all SHA's country programmes will incorporate, where possible, a nutrition component at proposal development stage. Baseline studies typically include at least a Food Consumption Score (FCS) to determine what level of dietary diversity exists within communities (food utilisation). This, together with compiling a "Seasonal Food Availability Calendar" and a "Malnutrition Problem Tree" at community level, can assist in understanding what foods from different food groups are available in the different seasons of the year and what issues are contributing to malnutrition. Such analysis supports better project planning on what crops or small animals to introduce to increase better access and availability of a more nutritious and diverse diet. During the implementation phase, great emphasis is placed on enhancing learning on the utilisation of foods, food safety, preservation and storage, together with developing local recipes and conducting cooking demonstrations. A basic component on water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WaSH) is also introduced in order to assist in improving health and nutrition outcomes at household level.

Some of SHA's programmes include nutrition-specific interventions targeting vulnerable groups, (particularly mothers and infants) mainly through the promotion



Felsiter Namfukwe, Nsunda Village, Zambia

of improved practices on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), in line with the "1000 days window of opportunity" (from conception to two years of age) initiative. Together with the technical staff of the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, explicit training is conducted on IYCF practices, as well as maternal nutrition and health, to key community focal persons. These community focal persons will form groups and conduct cascade training to embed good nutrition practices within their communities. This community integration of nutrition within agricultural programming (an approach piloted by SHA in Zambia in 2013) will contribute to the reduction of malnutrition in young children.



From left, Yeshi Bori, Mursat Ersasahu and Alamenesh Mezgebu, Nutrition Training Centre, Ethiopia

What can research contribute?

SHA works with research institutions and other agencies in undertaking **adaptive research** to understand and document different approaches to better incorporate nutrition within agriculture at community level. Tools for measuring and capturing the impact of various interventions will be piloted and tested in different contexts. SHA supports the piloting of new initiatives and products such as biofortified crops and food fortification that will increase the availability of more nutritious crops at community level.



How do we advocate for Nutrition within Agriculture?

SHA supports advocacy efforts to increase support for nutrition within agriculture in its target countries, through donor support. We work through our national and international networks, including the Irish Forum for International Agricultural Development (IFIAD), Dóchas Working Group on Livelihoods, Food and Nutrition Security, the UK All Party Parliamentary Group and the FAO Civil Society Mechanism. We also support other international networks such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Initiative, the Food Security and Nutrition Network and the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN).

In-country SHA advocates for an increased adoption of nutrition within agriculture through a multi-sectoral approach to programming. This is done through engaging with the nutrition coordinating committees at district and national level, promoting the production of a more diverse variety of crops with a particular focus on more nutritious crops including pulses, fruit, vegetables and bio-fortified crops.

In Practice

The paragraphs below provide examples of nutrition Interventions incorporated into agriculture programmes within our various country programmes.

Typical interventions include:

Training/capacity building and sensitisation at community and district level around: production of higher quality and quantity of diverse crops with a specific focus on pulses and vegetables; improved small livestock husbandry; understanding of food groups and the need for a balanced diet; better utilisation of food at household level in combination with developing local recipes and basic cooking demonstrations; improved post-harvest handling and storage practices which are key to improving the shelf life of food and reducing wastage and spoilage



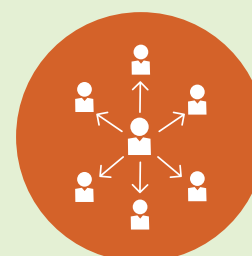
WASH – water, sanitation and hygiene promotion



Working closely with other technical areas in SHA to enhance, among others, crop diversification, gender mainstreaming, and enterprise-nutrition linkages



Networking and linking with different Ministries and stakeholders at country level



Nutrition-specific interventions where a strong component of maternal and young child health and feeding practices is promoted





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