



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR EASTERN AFRICA

## ENDING HUNGER IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: MOVING FROM RHETORIC TO ACTION

### STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPROVING COORDINATED EFFORTS ON ENDING HUNGER, MALNUTRITION AND POVERTY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported the African Union Commission through a Technical Cooperation Programme to strengthen partnership and improve coordinated efforts on ending hunger, malnutrition and poverty in the Horn of Africa (HOA). This project is intended to provide a forum for governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), development partners and other stakeholders to develop strategies and policies that would contribute to the coordination of ongoing efforts to reduce hunger in six countries (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda) in the HOA subregion. The programme focused on the two key Regional Economic Communities in this region – the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC).

The objective of the project was to review Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) coordination mechanisms at the subregional level. The study analyses trends in FNS in the region including reliance on imported food, net exports and trends of undernourishment. It describes challenges, opportunities and gaps that need to be addressed to reduce hunger in the six countries and proposes (i) a strengthened subregional and national FNS coordination mechanism; (ii) an Eastern Africa peer review mechanism; and (iii) a policy brief for FNS coordination in the HOA.

Poverty constrains the ability of farming households to invest in productive assets and agricultural technologies, resulting in insufficient agricultural productivity. Poverty is compounded by factors such as conflicts, disease epidemics and climate change (such as droughts and floods). Conflict and civil wars in parts of Eastern Africa continue to undermine efforts against hunger, such as in South Sudan and Somalia. Conflict contributes to the displacement of people, disrupt transportation and market transactions and subsequently, lack of access to food.

In Eastern Africa the prevalence of undernourishment was 32 percent between 2014-16 the highest prevalence in Africa. This amounts to approximately 125.8 million (between the years 2014-2016), which is an increase from 112.9 million people from 2004-2006 (FAO et al., 2017). Factors such as rising food prices, droughts and political instability have worsened the hunger situation in several African countries.

The most important problem is the high prevalence of chronic malnutrition or stunting, despite the fact that a decrease was observed during the period 2005 to 2014.

Food insecurity and malnutrition interact in a vicious downward spiral and are linked to disease. Inadequate food consumption heightens vulnerability to infectious diseases. It is believed that prolonged drought experienced in certain regions of the continent has negatively impacted the expected reduction in poverty and food insecurity, despite the economic growth experienced across the continent over the last decade. The global rise in food prices compounds these crises. Food crop production is not increasing at the adequate rate needed to meet higher demands caused by population growth, currently averaging 2.4 percent annually across Africa. Therefore, it is expected that food scarcity will drive up food prices in certain regions of the continent.

Low public investment in agriculture; lack of investment in modern farming practices and technologies; over-reliance on rain-fed agriculture; low investment in irrigation for smallholders, water pans and dams for pastoralists, post-harvest handling and food storage facilities, and climate-resilient crops and livestock varieties have all negatively impacted the attainment of food security in the region.

Realizing the potential for increased agricultural growth and food security would require investment in integrated approaches that would enable smallholder farmers to adapt and rapidly respond to the negative impacts of a changing climate in the agricultural environment. For instance, given the rising competition for water, policy-makers may need to focus on minimizing constraints to the adoption of appropriate technology focusing on sustainable water use through irrigation and implementing best farming practices. There is a need to stimulate the capacity of rural communities and individual families to take stock of their resources and the opportunities open to them, help them test alternative solutions and improve their access to sources of relevant knowledge and expertise as well as capital and markets. In the long term it is essential that conditions be created whereby people have increased access to employment opportunities outside agriculture.

In terms of FNS coordination at the national level, evidence from the six countries covered by the study indicates the presence of food security and nutrition coordination mechanisms. Even though in countries such as Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia, the food security coordination systems seem to be strong, generally they are characterized by lack of an effective FNS coordination body, weak FNS policy coordination and implementation, unclear roles of ministries responsible for the implementation of FNS, insufficient budgetary allocation, weak monitoring and evaluation tools and lack of clarity regarding linkage to global, continental and subregional declarations on ending hunger.

At the subregional level, while the two Regional Economic Communities have policies and strategies addressing FNS, subregional FNS coordination needs to be strengthened institutionally for effective support to member countries. In addition, inclusivity and the building of partnerships are key. Regional Economic Communities in collaboration with Member States, the private sector, civil society, development partners and the UN need to work together on the issue of ending hunger in the HOA.

In order to achieve the overall goal of food and nutrition security, the complexities of all the four dimensions of availability, accessibility, utilization and stability must be addressed concurrently by establishing effective linkages for collaboration and coordination of all sectors. It is therefore important to strengthen linkages and put in place institutional structures involving the regional, national and county governments, development partners, the private sector, civil society and local communities.

To achieve this, certain structures must be put in place to establish functional, organizational and legal frameworks. These include:

- i) A subregional Food and Nutrition Security Coordination Secretariat;
- ii) National Interministerial/Cabinet Committee;
- iii) Parliamentary Subcommittee on FNS;
- iv) National FNS Steering Committee;
- v) National FNS Secretariat (to be located at the office of the President, Prime Minister or Deputy President);
- vi) Coordination Technical Working Groups (Coordination; Policy Harmonization and Implementation; FNS Information; and Monitoring and Evaluation).

The study proposes a biennial Eastern Africa Peer Review Mechanism to end hunger in the HOA to ensure an effective and coordinated monitoring and evaluation system that can be used as an accountability tool for measurement and can track progress, address challenges, and identify opportunities and lessons learned by member states. Furthermore, progress and success are greatly increased if close attention is paid to regularly measuring impacts, reporting on progress and learning from past experiences. This tool will contribute towards tracking the subregion's success in increasing food supply, reducing hunger and malnutrition, and improving the effectiveness of responses to food crises.

The study moreover proposes a robust monitoring and evaluation tool. Careful selection of indicators at all levels is recommended for effective monitoring and evaluation to capture the active participation and reporting of all stakeholders in order to ensure improved planning and implementation of programmes towards the achievement of the common FNS goal.

Finally, the study recommends that each country mainstreams FNS into relevant policies, strategies and programmes. A legal framework addressing FNS must be developed by each country and passed into legislation.

#### FAO SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR EASTERN AFRICA

CMC Road Near ILRI,  
Kebele 12/13, Bole Sub  
City, Gurd Shola

**Tel:** +251 11 647 8888  
**E-mail:** [FAO-Latest@fao.org](mailto:FAO-Latest@fao.org)  
[www.fao.org/eastern-africa](http://www.fao.org/eastern-africa)

**PO Box:**  
5536, Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia

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