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How Africa Can Build a Future Free
from Hunger and Malnutrition



BURKINA FASO



CASE STUDY



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Between 2000 and 2016, the nutrition situation in Burkina Faso improved steadily. The Global Hunger Index fell from 48 in 2000 to 31 in 2016 (equivalent to a 36 percent change). During the same period, child stunting decreased from 45 percent to 33 percent and child wasting from 16 percent to 11 percent. This is partly due to the elevation of the National Center of Nutrition to the Directorate General of Health, the creation of a National Council for Nutrition Consultation, and the implementation of interventions such as mother-to-mother support groups, community-based management of moderate acute malnutrition, and the multisectoral Enhanced Homestead Food Production Programme. Under a plan to scale up optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) in 2013, the government committed to raising the number of children, aged 6–23 months, receiving a minimum acceptable diet from 4 percent in 2012 to 30 percent in 2025.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

In Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Health oversees nutrition outcomes through the National Center of Nutrition (Centre National de Nutrition, CNN). In 2002, the CNN became the Directorate of Nutrition (Direction de la Nutrition, DN) attached to the Directorate General of Health. The DN is responsible for ensuring intra- and intersectoral nutrition coordination; defining national nutritional norms and standards; providing advisory support for the development of nutrition activities in health services and at community level; participating in the evaluation of food security and nutrition programs; and managing the national food security and nutrition surveillance system. In 2008, a multisectoral advisory body – the National Council for Nutrition Consultation (CNCN) – was set up to provide insights and recommendations on the implementation of the national nutrition policy.¹ The CNCN includes, among others, the ministries for Agriculture and Food Security, Water and Sanitation, Social Action and National Solidarity, Economic Affairs and Finance, Advancement of Women and Gender Issues, and National Education. The body coordinates, organizes, guides, and monitors the implementation of the 2007 national nutrition policy.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

The government's commitment to improving the nutrition status of its citizens is reflected in several programs and projects that have been introduced in the past 15 years.² To improve the survival rates of children, and their cognitive and physical development, the government commenced projects for supplementation. For instance, in 2001, universal salt iodization and food fortification programs were implemented, while fortification of vegetable oils with vitamin A began in 2006. The processing of complementary foods using local produce for infants and young children is also encouraged by the government, while the promotion of the superfood, spirulina, has been an active program since 2005.³ In 2013, a plan to scale up optimal IYCF practices was implemented. Its aim was to increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding among infants under 6 months from 38 percent in 2012 to 80 percent by 2025. Under the same plan, the number of children aged 6–23 months receiving a minimum acceptable diet was to be raised from 4 percent in 2012 to 30 percent in 2025.⁴ Burkina Faso joined the Scaling Up Nutrition movement in 2011.⁵

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¹ Ministère De La Sante, 2010, Plan Stratégique Nutrition 2010-2015. <https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/files/BFA%202010%20Plan%20Strat%C3%A9gique%20Nutrition%20%282010-2015%29.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ UNICEF, 2014, Nutrition: Annual Results Report. https://www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/files/2014_Annual_Results_Report_Nutrition.pdf

⁵ Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, Burkina Faso (SUN Movement Compendium), 2014, http://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SUN_Compendium_ENG_20141026_17BurkinaFaso.pdf

⁶ UNICEF, 2014, Nutrition: Annual Results Report. https://www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/files/2014_Annual_Results_Report_Nutrition.pdf

⁷ Micronutrient Initiative, 2016, Infant And Young Child Nutrition In Burkina Faso. https://www.nutritionintl.org/content/user_files/2016/07/MI_OnePager_Burkina-Faso_IYCN-ENG-WEB-FINAL.pdf

⁸ Olney, D., Bliznashka, L., Pedehombga, A., Dillon, A., Ruel, M. and Heckert, J., 2015, "Women's Nutrition and Empowerment are Improved through Participation in an Integrated Agriculture and Nutrition Program in Burkina Faso," The FASEB Journal 29, no. http://www.fasebj.org/content/29/1_Supplement/898.25

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, 2017, Burkina Faso (2017).: Institutional transformations in 2016-2017. SUN Movement. <http://docs.scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Burkina-Faso-SUN-Movement-Annual-Progress-Report-2017.pdf>

A new element introduced under the IYCF initiative are mother-to-mother support groups, which function as platforms for community-based counseling to stimulate positive behavior and social change to improve nutrition outcomes. Each mother-to-mother support group includes 15 participants, facilitated by a trained community health worker to encourage early breastfeeding initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for six months. In addition to encouraging early and exclusive breastfeeding, the support groups also provided an entry point for multisectoral nutrition-sensitive interventions, such as homestead food production, home fortification, and optimal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) practices promotion using a household model approach.⁶ In 2014, an evaluation showed that the mother-to-mother support groups were an ideal platform to stimulate nutrition-related behavioral change and noted the need to harness the support of community leaders to address cultural and social barriers to optimal nutrition practices.

Furthermore, to address the prevention, timely detection, and community-based management of moderate acute malnutrition, a community-based intervention was implemented by the Ministry of Health's Nutrition Directorate in the district of Tougan between 2013 and 2015. The project used an integrated community-based demonstration program, combining child growth monitoring with the distribution of multiple micronutrient powders for home fortification of complementary foods. It also included cooking demonstrations, and in-depth individual and group training on child feeding practices. Three million micronutrient powder servings were supplied and distributed, and screening and prevention services reached 735,000 children with acute malnutrition.⁷ An additional 60,000 severe acute malnutrition cases were detected and treated with a recovery rate of 90 percent.

Burkina Faso also piloted a multisectoral Enhanced Homestead Food Production Programme between 2013 and 2016. The program established community gardens and provided seeds, tools, and knowledge about good agricultural, health, hygiene, and nutrition practices to mothers with young children (3–12 months old). Within just two years, the program increased women's intake of meat and poultry by 8 percent and of fruits by 16 percent, and raised overall dietary diversity among participating women, compared to those who were not enrolled in the program. Prevalence of underweight among beneficiary women decreased by almost 9 percent, while their children benefited too. The prevalence of anemia in infants aged 3–6 months decreased by 15 percent, and among children aged 3–12 months the prevalence of wasting decreased by 9 percent, while cases of diarrhea were reduced by up to 16 percent.^{8,9}

A wide range of interventions have been implemented in Burkina Faso aimed at improving food security and nutrition in the country, and steady progress has been made toward achieving national and international nutrition targets, including the Malabo Declaration target of reducing stunting levels to 10 percent by 2025. Burkina Faso's multisectoral and multiplayer nutrition platform has since been decentralized to the regional level and efforts are ongoing to adopt monitoring and evaluation as well as common results frameworks to track continued progress.¹⁰