



COMPACT
2025



ETHIOPIA

ENDING HUNGER & UNDERNUTRITION
CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

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SYNOPSIS OF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Synopsis of Compact2025 Roundtable Discussion in Ethiopia

Compact2025, launched in November 2015, is a bold new initiative for ending hunger and undernutrition by 2025. It brings stakeholders together to set priorities, innovate and learn, fine-tune actions, build on successes, and synthesize sharable lessons in order to accelerate progress.

Compact2025 and partners organized a roundtable discussion in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on March 28, 2016 to set the critical groundwork for assessing how to end hunger and undernutrition in Ethiopia by 2025. The roundtable identified key knowledge, policy, and implementation gaps as well as opportunities, potential synergies and priority areas for action. This synopsis summarizes the roundtable discussions, recommendations, and next steps.

Ethiopia's food security and nutrition situation

Ethiopia has made significant gains in reducing hunger and undernutrition and in addressing some of the underlying issues that hold back progress. But while agricultural production and incomes have been rising and poverty has been steadily decreasing over the last two decades, hunger and undernutrition remain prevalent.

Considering the high rates of hunger several decades ago, Ethiopia has shown great progress in improving the state of food security. From 1990 to 2015, prevalence of undernourishment was more than halved, from 75 percent to 32 percent —a sign of strong, yet incomplete progress. Child undernutrition, in the form of stunting or low height for age is still high. The proportion of child under 5 years of age affected by stunting in Ethiopia dropped from 62 to 40 percent between 1992 and 2014. Prevalence of child stunting varies by income group. In 2011, for example, less than 30 percent of children from the wealthiest families were stunted, yet nearly half of children from all other wealth quintiles were stunted.

Undernutrition results in severe human and economic costs. For example, in 2009, Ethiopia lost an estimated 16.5 percent of GDP due to undernutrition. In order for Ethiopia to meet its goals and end hunger and undernutrition by 2025, progress must be accelerated.

Roundtable discussions

Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia Demeke Mekonnen gave remarks to open the roundtable discussion. Also offering remarks were Chief Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister and Executive Director of Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), Ato Newai Gebre-Ab, and IFPRI director general Shenggen Fan. IFPRI Country Program Leader in Ethiopia Bart Minten presented on Ethiopia's current food security and nutrition situation and recent trends. This presentation set the stage for a series of panel and roundtable discussions.

Participants discussed questions of (1) which new or different policies/programs are needed to accelerate progress; (2) what data, information, and knowledge gaps must be filled; (3) what innovative approaches can be used to break down silos; and (4) what roles should different stakeholders play. They discussed these questions in two sessions, first on agriculture and nutrition, and the second on health and nutrition. A third discussion took place around how to better coordinate policies and programs across sectors and stakeholders, and how to use innovative approaches to enhance synergies. A final panel on accelerating process included reflections from development partners.

Five major recommendations

Recommendations resulting from the Ethiopia roundtable discussion to address challenges, fill gaps, and exploit opportunities to accelerate progress, include:

1. Fill data and knowledge gaps

Participants identified several data gaps that must be filled in order to generate evidence to inform policies and programs. These include data on key groups (for example, pastoralists) and areas (for example, food-insecure hotspots). Participants also recommended the collection of more gender-disaggregated data and intrahousehold data—for example, very little data is collected on youth ages 10 to 15. Data should also cover the various regions and agroecological zones throughout Ethiopia to account for and understand varying consumption patterns, as well as the agricultural challenges unique to different areas. Overall, national surveys with large samples sizes are recommended in order to provide enough information for analysis at the *woreda* level.

Critical knowledge gaps include further understanding linkages between nutrition and other sectors, including natural resource management, markets, and gender—for example, research can shed light on any potential trade-offs between empowering women and their traditional roles as caregivers, and impacts on nutrition outcomes. More research on how to use behavior change communication to create demand for nutritious food, and research for a broader understanding of the social and cultural drivers of malnutrition is also needed. Lastly, there is a need to broaden the evidence base for nutrition-driven programs, as well as evidence on impacts of nutrition-specific interventions.

Filling data and knowledge gaps requires upgraded knowledge management and information-sharing systems. Participants identified a need for better systems to share data, knowledge, and lessons learned both among and between stakeholders and sectors. One example could be creating a database of research findings to inform policy formulation and programming. Monitoring and evaluation systems that provide continuous feedback mechanisms to inform programs at all levels should be set up or improved.

2. Develop policies and accountability for better nutrition

As issues of nutrition cut across many sectors, accountability should also be shared. Starting from the highest levels, nutrition should be a mandate that cuts across relevant line ministries, sectoral policies, and donors. Experiences in Ethiopia with mainstreaming issues of gender and HIV across sectors can provide examples for doing so with nutrition. Nutrition financing and an accountability structure should be developed.

Policies should help to improve nutrition outcomes of consumers, particularly poor consumers. For example, the government can establish dietary guidelines and communicate those guidelines to improve proper utilization of food. Additionally, agricultural policies that promote horticulture along with staple crops can help to make agriculture more nutrition-driven and improve nutrition outcomes for consumers. Forward-thinking policies should also be developed to address and prevent overweight and obesity.

Further, a framework or strategy should be developed to ensure quality and safety of food. This includes a plan to improve production and laboratory capacities, implement tests and inspections, create and regulate quality standards, and develop a legal framework that works for large and small farms.

3. Enhance implementation and scale-up of programs

As Ethiopia begins to implement the Seqota Declaration, it is crucial to build in systems for monitoring and evaluation in order to learn lessons and refine programs for scale up. Also, opportunities to harmonize implementation and build on synergies across sectors and actors need to be exploited. For example, agriculture and social protection programs should be driven by nutrition outcomes; school feeding programs can buy nutritious foods from agricultural cooperatives; and complementarities in enhancing nutrition can be found in advancing improved WASH infrastructure and providing irrigation. Further, health professionals should also be engaged in nutrition-driven practices. The vast network of extension workers should be trained and leveraged to provide information on best practices in nutrition at the household level.

4. Improve coordination

No one sector or organization can end hunger and undernutrition alone, and coordination is key to complement each other's efforts while avoiding duplication. While mechanisms are in place to coordinate across sectors and actors, existing platforms should be strengthened. Participants suggested that a high office—at the level of the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister—could act as a body to coordinate efforts and track progress from multiple actors. Additionally, coordinating committees should have greater decision-making authority. Participants also recommended creating a platform for private sector groups and cooperatives to get involved.

Coordination should be strengthened at all levels of government, down to the *woreda* level, and such coordination should direct efforts toward common targets. Joint planning and budgeting can help to improve cooperation across sectors.

5. Strengthen capacity

There is a need to strengthen in-country capacity at all levels, especially for nutrition knowledge and food safety standards. Nutrition knowledge should be improved by establishing a focal person for nutrition in each *woreda*. Furthermore, joint capacity building activities should be implemented for actors across sectors working at the community level. A nutrition curriculum should be developed to train workers on the ground in good nutrition practices.

Along the food value chain, capacity must be strengthened in order for all parties to enhance nutrition and to meet food quality and safety standards. At the household level, greater capacity, knowledge, and accountability are needed to accelerate progress. Improving household knowledge on proper utilization of food and sharing knowledge on nutrition can help to fill this gap.

Next steps

There are many opportunities to fill gaps in research, policy, and implementation in order to accelerate progress. Responding to the needs identified at the roundtable discussion, Compact2025 will set up a Knowledge and Innovation Hub in Ethiopia, ideally within the Prime Minister's Office in partnership with relevant ministries and stakeholders. The hub will work to support country goals, processes, and programs with demand-driven research for the purpose of accelerating progress. It will help to collect data, strengthen capacities, and enhance tracking and monitoring systems. The hub will synthesize lessons and compile, share, and communicate information and best practices within Ethiopia and beyond. It will also leverage existing networks, including the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) located in Addis Ababa. Outputs of the hub will include a freely accessible website, which will be set up so that it can be accessed by farmers and individuals in local communities through their mobile phones. A follow-up roundtable will be held next year to reconvene stakeholders, evaluate progress, identify action gaps, and fine-tune next steps toward ending hunger and undernutrition by 2025 in Ethiopia.