

The Federal Democratic  
Republic of Ethiopia



**National Nutrition Strategy**

Federal Ministry of Health

January 2008  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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## **1. Introduction**

Appropriate and coordinated nutrition actions enable the creation of a healthy and productive labor force, which is vital to ensuring rapid social and economic development. Guaranteeing food security, proper child and mother care practices, provision of adequate health services as well as maintaining appropriate hygiene and sanitary conditions are essential to optimal nutrition. These wide-ranging activities therefore involve a number of sectors, underlining the importance of coherent and coordinated actions among relevant sectors and institutions to improve the status of nutrition.

The extent of malnutrition in a country is determined by examining the level of chronic malnutrition (prevalence of stunting, height-for-age). The level of stunting is determined by comparing the height of a child with average height of children of the same age. The Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) carried out in 2005 showed that 47 percent of children under-five in Ethiopia were stunted. Similarly, 27 percent of all women of childbearing age were found to suffer from chronic energy deficiency.

There are high levels of micronutrient deficiencies in Ethiopia. The adverse effects of micronutrient deficiencies on health include, but are not limited to: impaired resistance to infection, chronic fatigue, poor mental and physical development, blindness, complications in pregnancy, delivery and low birth weight.

Food insecurity is not the only cause of malnutrition. Other factors such as improper feeding practices, poor child and maternal care practices, as well as social and traditional factors contribute to malnutrition.

In Ethiopia, considerable progress has been made in addressing the problem of food insecurity. The Government has established rural development extension strategies and related programs to address food insecurity problems. Encouraging results have already been achieved.

Similarly, strengthened efforts, focusing more on preventive services, have also been made in addressing the basic problem of health. In this regard, the recent introduction of the health extension