NUTRITION INTERNATIONAL

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Ethiopia programs

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Nutrition International in Ethiopia

Established in 2005, Nutrition International's Ethiopia office has become a trusted partner of the government in addressing the burden of malnutrition through affordable, innovative programs and interventions.

While progress has been made, undernutrition remains a critical yet underaddressed human development challenge in Ethiopia. Nearly four in ten (39%) children under five are stunted[1] and 11% suffer from wasting.[2] Similarly, nearly one in-five (19%) of Ethiopian women are malnourished, while 12% are classified as overweight or obese. Micronutrient deficencies are widespread, affecting 66% of women and 50% of adolescent girls, with 17% affected by anaemia, perpetuating an integenerational cycle of undernutrition.[3] The high prevalence of stunting, even among wealthier populations, indicates that malnutrition across the country is driven by more than just poverty and food insecurity.

Nutrition International, with support from the Government of Canada and the Gates Foundation, works closely with the Federal Ministry of Health, regional health bureaus and other development partners to improve the nutritonal status of Ethiopian women, children and girls.

As a trusted partner, Nutrition International supports the Government of Ethiopia to deliver various nutrition-related programs, including:

- Adolescent health and nutrition
- Universal salt iodization
- Maternal and newborn health and nutrition
- Large-scale food fortification
- Vitamin A supplementation
- Diarrhoea treatment with zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration salts (Lo-ORS)
- Product development and market introduction of double-fortified salt with iodine and folic acid
- Technical assistance for the Seqota Declaration Programme

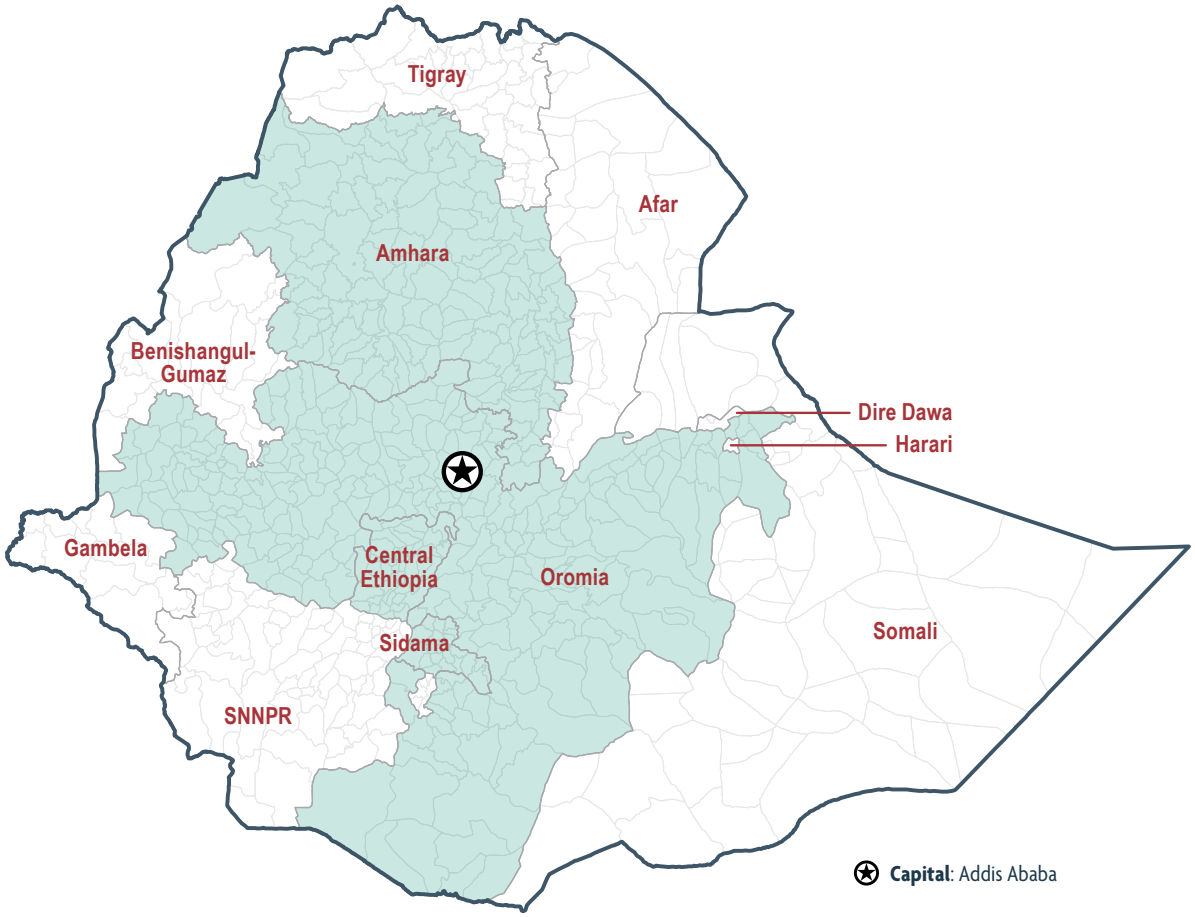
Priority programs and geographic coverage

In Ethiopia, Nutrition International responds to the high burden of malnutrition guided by the national priorities outlined in the National Food and Nutrition Policy. Our objectives include:

- Improving the quality and coverage of maternal and newborn health and nutrition services
- Scaling up adolescent nutrition and education programs
- Promoting large-scale food fortification
- Boosting the coverage of twice-yearly vitamin A supplementation for children under five
- Improving the coverage and utilization of adequately fortified salt with iodine
- Promoting the use of zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration salts to treat childhood diarrhoea

Programs supported by Nutrition International

Nutrition International in Ethiopia supports the following interventions and projects:



NATIONAL:

- Vitamin A supplementation
- Technical assistance (to support the implementation of the Seqota Declaration)
- Large-scale food fortification (edible oil and wheat flour)
- Universal salt iodization

SUBNATIONAL:

- Adolescent health and nutrition
- Maternal and newborn health and nutrition
- Infant and young child nutrition
- Zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration salts treatment for childhood diarrhoea

Large-scale food fortification

Large-scale food fortification is a cost-effective, high-impact intervention to address micronutrient deficiencies at scale. Since 2016, Nutrition International has been supporting the government and private sector to introduce and scale up wheat flour fortification in Ethiopia.

Food fortification advocacy

To coordinate finance and advocacy efforts, Nutrition International developed and implemented a food fortification advocacy strategy. Our technical and financial support to the National Food Fortification Steering Committee and the National Food Fortification Technical Committee has strengthened strategic advocacy and lobbying activities, effectively promoting the mandatory fortification of edible oil and wheat flour.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- A five-year (2023/24–2027/28) food fortification strategic action plan was launched
- 320 personnel, including food inspectors, researchers, and processors from the edible oil, salt and wheat flour industries received training in quality auditing and improvement
- 158 wheat millers conducted a food fortification readiness assessment to adequately prepare for the next fortification intervention
- The National Food Fortification Alliance was established to address the private sector's challenges in implementing food fortification programs, with Nutrition International serving as a founding member

Universal salt iodization

Nutrition International works alongside the Government of Ethiopia, development partners, media and the private sector to support increased production and household consumption of adequately iodized salt. This support focuses on improving government monitoring and enforcement of iodization laws, advocating for stronger policies and practices, enhancing the capacity of salt producers and driving the consolidation of the salt industry.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Over 41M people consumed adequately iodized salt in areas served by Nutrition International-supported salt processing industries
- 342,112 MT of adequately iodized edible salt were produced and sold by Nutrition International-supported salt processors
- 89.4% coverage of adequately iodized salt across Ethiopia
- 438 inspectors, salt processors, exporters and policymakers were trained in internal quality improvement and control

Product development and market introduction of iodine-folic acid and double-fortified salt in Ethiopia

Folate insufficiency is a major issue in Ethiopia, contributing to neural tube defects (NTDs) at rates nearly eight times higher than in other African countries. Limited consumption of folate-rich foods leaves 60 to 100% of Ethiopian women with insufficient folate levels, with wide disparities across regions, increasing their risk of NTD-affected pregnancies. This can lead to severe health issues, stigma, and significant psychological and financial strain on families – particularly mothers who the burden of care often falls to.

Since 2019, Nutrition International has been working with partners including the University of Toronto, the University of California at Davis, Reach Another Foundation and the Ethiopian Public Health Institute to support the development and introduction of double-fortified salt with iodine and folate acid to improve access to folic acid for women across the country.

Vitamin A supplementation

Vitamin A deficiency is a significant public health problem in Ethiopia, leading to 80,000 associated deaths per year and affecting 61% of preschool aged children.[4] Nutrition International provides the full national supply of vitamin A capsules every year to the Ministry of Health through the in-kind donation program, implemented by Nutrition International and UNICEF, with support from the Government of Canada.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 32,000,000 vitamin A capsules were donated to Ethiopia through the capsule in-kind program
- Technical support was provided to conduct a situation analysis and planning session in the Amhara region, aimed at identifying the most effective strategies to reach children who missed their VAS dose due to ongoing conflict
- Over 960,000 children under five were reached with two doses of vitamin A supplementation (VAS) across 78 Nutrition International-supported woredas
- A child-centered monitoring tool pilot study was conducted in 36 health posts across nine Nutrition International project zones. The endline assessment revealed that 90% of children in the pilot areas received their second VAS dose within the recommended six-month interval

Maternal and newborn health and nutrition

Nutrition International's maternal and newborn health and nutrition (MNHN) care package, delivered in coordination with the Ministry of Health, aims to enhance the coverage and quality of antenatal care (ANC). This includes increasing iron and folic acid supplementation during pregnancy, promoting facility deliveries with skilled birth attendants and improving newborn and postnatal care practices such as the timely initiation of breastfeeding, optimal timing of cord clamping, clean cord care using chlorhexidine and nutrition counselling.

A key aspect of Nutrition International's approach is collaborative quality improvement, which fosters peer-to-peer learning by bringing together service providers and program managers to strengthen the health system's capacity to deliver quality MNHN interventions. The MNHN program is currently implemented in four regional states: Amhara, Oromia, Sidama and Central Ethiopia.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 292,073 pregnant women attending ANC received 90+ iron and folic acid supplements
- 235,099 pregnant women in Nutrition International-supported areas completed four ANC contacts
- 197,762 deliveries were attended by skilled birth attendants
- 155,875 newborns received chlorhexidine applications for cord care

Adolescent health and nutrition

Nutrition International leads the introduction and scale-up of adolescent nutrition programs, focusing on nutrition education and weekly iron and folic acid supplementation (WIFAS) to reduce anaemia among adolescent girls.

Currently, Nutrition International is supporting the implementation of the National Nutrition Program II, which aims to reach nearly one million adolescents with a high-impact, cost-effective package of nutrition interventions. The program spans 75 woredas across Oromia, Amhara, Sidama and Central Ethiopia.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 474,569 in-school adolescents, including 319,757 girls and 154,812 boys aged 10–19 years, received gender-responsive nutrition education
- 313,239 in-school adolescent girls received any WIFAS
- 285 schoolgirls' clubs have established meaningful partnerships with 124 primary healthcare units and their school communities to facilitate the transition to gender transformative adolescent nutrition programming

Diarrhoea treatment with zinc and Lo-ORS

Diarrhoea remains one of the three major causes of childhood mortality in Ethiopia. Since 2011, Nutrition International has provided technical and financial support to the government for the introduction and scaling up of zinc and Lo-ORS as the first-line treatment for childhood diarrhoea cases.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 272,614 diarrhoea episodes in children under five were treated with zinc and Lo-ORS at public health facilities across 78 Nutrition International-supported woredas
- 1,117 graduate students received training on the revised National Integrated Management of Newborn and Childhood Illnesses (IMNCI) guideline in Nutrition International-supported universities and health science colleges
- 438 individuals, including Nutrition International extenders, and zonal and woreda program officers received training to build their capacity in facilitating dialogues for father-to-father support groups
- 99 healthcare providers across nine regions received basic training on the revised IMNCI guideline to address shortages of IMNCI trained staff at health facilities

System strengthening through technical assistance

Nutrition International has been supporting the Government of Ethiopia in coordinating the implementation of the Seqota Declaration by developing the investment plan, piloting the innovative phases, conducting the baseline survey and building the capacity of managers at both federal and regional levels.

Currently, Nutrition International is providing technical assistance to the Federal Program Delivery Unit to oversee the expansion phase of the Seqota Declaration in 340 woredas across the country. By 2026, the initiative is expected to be scaled up to 700 woredas across 11 regions and two city administrations.

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