

# Evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM): Nutrition leadership for Zambia

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## **Poster: Evidence Informed Decision Making (EIDM): Nutrition Leadership for Zambia**

### **Section 1: Overview**

With 40% of children under the age of 5 years chronically undernourished, Zambia's nutrition situation requires urgent attention as highlighted by the World Health Organisation cut-offs. In addition, the rate of overweight and obesity has almost doubled among women of child bearing age from 12% in 2002 to 23% in 2014. The co-existence of undernutrition and over nutrition in the population possess a double burden of malnutrition in the country. Therefore, this map relates to evidence informed decision making in the leadership for nutrition as a necessary ingredient to influencing policy and action if the nutritional status of the Zambia population is to improve.

There are various role players in the EIDM landscape for nutrition in Zambia. The main ones include the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC), an institution established by act of parliament in 1967. NFNC is mandated to provide a multi-sectoral co-ordination of nutrition in Zambia. Other key government players include the ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, Community Development and Local Government.

Another main player is the Nutrition Association of Zambia (NAZ) which is a professional body for nutritionists. NAZ with members from various sectors such as health, education and agriculture is uniquely placed to provide technical expertise on various aspects of nutrition at different platforms including the scaling up of nutrition (SUN). NAZ also champions the advocacy regarding Nutrition Workforce for various sectors of government.

Civil Society Organisation Scale up of Nutrition (CSO SUN) is an alliance of civil society organisations that has emerged as an advocate for raising of the profile of nutrition on the Zambia's development agenda. CSO SUN has a wide range of membership which include organisations that generate evidence through research, translate and/or those that use the evidence.

Other main players are the academia which include the Food Science and Nutrition Department under the School of Agriculture as well as the Department of Community Medicine within the School of Medicine of the University of Zambia (UNZA). Other learning institutions from outside the country have also collaborated with local institutions to generate evidence. Furthermore, the donor community have long supported the evidence generation, dissemination and promoted its utilisation. The Scaling Up of Nutrition Business Network is an emerging player with unique role in Zambia's nutrition landscape and potential contributor to decision making processes.

While the academia and research institutions are the main generators of evidence, relationships between research producers and users sometimes overlap with users also being co-producers.

Gaps that exist in the EIDM landscape include the need to enhance nutrition evidence generation and to prompt utilisation for policy and action within respective sectors and across sectors. There is need for initiatives that engage the stakeholders more actively in setting research priorities and

incorporating evidence in policy and actions beyond conventional dissemination meetings. There is also need to build in –country capacity for nutrition research and utilisation mechanisms to facilitate the flow of evidence through the different levels of decision making.

## **Section 2: Perceived Rapid Landscape**

### **Section 3: Conclusion**

There is need to provide support towards a needs based generation of evidence for nutrition in Zambia as well as the translation to inform policy and action. This would require crystalizing the system by strengthening leadership at three levels of research production, translation and use. This would benefit from a more co-ordinated effort that stems from setting a research agenda generated from nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive point of views.

The Landscape Map perceived, relates to the multi-sectoral stakeholder engagement in recognition that the effective address of malnutrition goes beyond any one sector. The map also highlights the need to understand how each sector can contribute towards the ultimate goal of improving the nutrition status of the Zambia population. This calls for evidence informed decision making at various levels including policy, programme and advocacy fraternity.

There are aspects of the engagement described in the map that work well and has potential to be scaled. Some of this relates to the programme level. For instance, the introduction of vitamin A supplementation in children was based on the evidence produced in a national wide micronutrient survey that revealed that high level of deficiencies in women and children. Other initiatives that could be enhanced is the project approach as seen by those collaborating with government to test approaches such as integrating agriculture and nutrition or breastfeeding in the context of HIV.

Generally, ‘research to policy and action highway’ is a metaphor to describe the overall EIDM system that could be aimed as regards to nutrition in Zambia. This calls for a co-ordinated approach to building capacity for nutrition research production, translation and appropriate evidence utilisation at various levels of decision making.

## Perceived Rapid Landscape

### RESEARCH PRODUCTION

Institutions of learning

Programme based  
research (Government  
ministries, NFNC,  
NGOs, cooperating  
partners)

### RESEARCH TRANSLATION

Evidence into Policy  
Network  
Brokers : NFNC, NAZ, CSO  
SUN

### RESEARCH USE

Sector level programmes  
NFNC  
NGOs  
NAZ

Support

Weak linkages  
with institutions of  
learning regarding  
research needs