

Action brief

# Safeguarding food and nutrition security in Ethiopia – the Seqota Declaration story

**Country:** Ethiopia

**Themes:** Nutrition-sensitive interventions

**Sub-themes:** Food security (including agriculture)

**Date:** October 2022



## Overview



Ethiopia aims to end child undernutrition in the country by 2030 through the implementation of a three-phase multisectoral plan. The Seqota Declaration aims “to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture” to enhance development. At the heart of the declaration are integrating climate- and nutrition-smart agriculture into programme interventions and promoting nutrition security in food-insecure areas of Ethiopia.

The strengths of the Seqota Declaration demonstrate the role of systems thinking and strong government ownership and coordination in safeguarding food and nutrition security in Ethiopia. Strong leadership has ensured the effective delivery of a high level of innovations across multiple sectors.





## Objectives of the action brief

The action brief aims to shed light on the Seqota Declaration.



## Period covered

In 2015, the Government of Ethiopia made a high-level, 15-year commitment to end, by 2030, stunting in children under 2 years of age.



## What action was taken?

The Seqota Declaration is a government initiative that aims to end stunting among children under 2 by 2030 by bringing together relevant nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and infrastructure sectors of government to break the cycle of undernutrition.

The initiative is divided into three phases, each of which supports and accelerates the implementation of the National Nutrition Plan II (NNP II) across 10 sectors while also driving six areas of innovation. The sectors and innovation areas are reflected in [Annex 1](#). The Seqota Declaration is supported by multiple development partners working collaboratively to facilitate the effective networking and streamlining of resources. This has included the deployment of technical partners and the implementation of joint financing by multiple donors to support the innovations.

The first phase of the Seqota Declaration was implemented in 2016–2020 in 40 districts (*woredas*). It focused on spurring innovative interventions across 10 Seqota Declaration strategic objectives (SDSOs).

The major successes of the first phase of the Seqota Declaration are:

1. Federal and regional government commitment and ownership: Rigorous planning, approval and leadership during implementation at all levels resulted in a progressive increase in annual financial allocations from the treasury and regional governments (US\$ 10–15 million per year) and the deployment of staff at federal, regional and *woreda* levels.
2. Performance measurement and accountability tools, with score cards, are reviewed and endorsed through six monthly high-level leadership performance review meetings.
3. Gender-responsive programming has resulted in:
  - 286,865 people receiving nutrient-dense crops, vegetables and fruits.
  - 291,567 milk goats distributed to 97,189 pregnant and lactating women.
  - 1,021,485 chickens distributed to 204,297 pregnant and lactating women.
4. The introduction of innovations to solve the challenges of multisectoral coordination included the appointment of nutrition champions in each of the relevant sectors to foster buy-in among stakeholders who traditionally had not prioritized nutrition and the garnering of financial support for nutrition initiatives. An example was the appointment of the State Minister of Agriculture as a nutrition champion who consequently spearheaded the development of the Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture strategy Strategy, structurally mainstreaming nutrition into the sector's work and strengthening his ministry's role in the multisectoral collaboration for nutrition. Specifically, there is now a dedicated nutrition team within the ministry that reports directly to the minister. Another example of a high-profile, efficacious nutrition champion is the former first lady, Her Excellency Roman Tesfaye. She directly engaged in nutrition activities, kept the spotlight on the issue, and convened a high-level nutrition advocacy mission that accelerated nutrition interventions and multisectoral linkages in Ethiopia. Such champions in each sector and at each level of government facilitate commitment and better coordination and collaboration for nutrition.
5. Improvements in infant and young child nutrition, achieved through complementary feeding and reduced household food insecurity.





6. Agricultural interventions such as the production of nutrient-dense crops, vegetables and fruits and the rearing of small livestock such as goats and chickens for milk and egg production for household consumption had the greatest impact on stunting.

- Nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions interventions resulting in improved coverage of complementary feeding among infants and young children averted the greatest number of child deaths.
- Based on programme performance records, over 75 per cent of households in the target population were reached with at least one agricultural intervention.
- Improved nutrition-sensitive agriculture translates to reduced household food insecurity and better nutrition for pregnant women and young children.

7. Increased coverage of numerous interventions contributed to observed reductions in under-5 mortality in the programme area.



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## What would the country do differently?

- Continuous and long-term technical assistance is more effective than shorter assignments. Technical assistance should be provided consistently throughout a long-term commitment to strengthen institutional capacity, ownership and continuity. The provision of technical assistance at the Program Delivery Unit (PDU) level throughout the implementation period is crucial to building PDU capacity in coordination and advocacy.
- Technical assistance must be flexible, iterative and able to adapt to unexpected circumstances. The phased approach of the Seqota Declaration requires a continual feedback loop to integrate lessons learned into subsequent activities and design. Challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the instability in Ethiopia's northern region demanded flexibility and innovative solutions. This includes reprogramming activities to meet humanitarian needs and phasing implementation across *woredas* as their situations improve.
- Buy-in and alignment of multisectoral stakeholders increase programme impact but require ongoing engagement at all levels. Many sectors, development partners and civil society organizations are involved in implementing the Seqota Declaration.
- Adequate resourcing for nutrition objectives is imperative for success. The Seqota Declaration is ambitious and demands bold national and subnational financing to be fully implemented.
- The development of investment cases to support regions as they develop multi-year, multisectoral costed *woreda* plans is crucial to ensure the adequate financing of action at the *woreda* level.



## Adaptation and applicability

- **Developing a national flagship multisectoral nutrition programme with strong government leadership and coordination is instrumental in bringing multiple sectors, development partners, donors and technical partners to deliver as one.**
- **With so many stakeholders involved, agreeing on programme design, coordinating efforts and sharing data can be challenging. This project highlights the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in regular high-level interministerial forums, coordination committees, quarterly and annual reviews, report dissemination and informal communication at all levels.**



## Next steps

The successes and lessons learned during Phase 1: Innovation has informed Phase 2: Expansion (2021–2025) and will inform Phase 3: Scale-up (2025–2030).



## Further information

### Seqota Declaration



<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lICydmVmUmHTE50NP8SGDGaPNmHbgOWO/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=17580319396598946416&rtpof=true&sd=true>



[https://www.moh.gov.et/site/initiatives-4-col/Seqota\\_Declaration](https://www.moh.gov.et/site/initiatives-4-col/Seqota_Declaration)

### Seqota Declaration Implementation Plan



[https://www.exemplars.health/-/media/files/egh/resources/stunting/ethiopia/seqota-declaration-implementation-plan-\(20162030\).pdf](https://www.exemplars.health/-/media/files/egh/resources/stunting/ethiopia/seqota-declaration-implementation-plan-(20162030).pdf)

### Peer-reviewed journal articles



<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0379572115611768?icid=int.sj-full-text.similar-articles.1>



<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0379572120957218?icid=int.sj-full-text.similar-articles.2>



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