



SOUTH SUDAN NUTRITION POLICY

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Acronyms

AU	African Union
ARNS	Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
BHWs	Boma Health Workers
BMS	Breast Milk Substitute
BPHNS	Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services
CMAM	Community Management of Acute Malnutrition
DHIS2	District Health Information System
ENIS	Emergency Nutrition Information System
FSNMS	Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
M&E	Monitoring And Evaluation
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoH	Ministry of Health
N4G	Nutrition For Growth
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIS	Nutrition Information Systems
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSNP	South Sudan Nutrition Policy
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WaSH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

WFP	World Food Program
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization
WRA	Women of Reproductive Age

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the stakeholders and experts whose unwavering support and active engagement have been instrumental in the successful development of the South Sudan Nutrition Policy (SSNP). Your dedication and contributions have played a crucial role in shaping this vital roadmap to address the multifaceted challenges of malnutrition in South Sudan.

First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to the Government of the Republic of South Sudan for its commitment to fulfilling the constitutional obligation of ensuring nutrition security for all South Sudanese. The active engagement and support provided by the relevant ministries and departments have been invaluable in driving the development of the SSNP.

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their knowledge, resources, and experiences. Your collaboration and support have been essential in shaping evidence-based approaches and strategies that form the backbone of the SSNP.

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Together, we have laid a strong foundation for addressing the multifaceted challenges of malnutrition in South Sudan, and I am confident that the South Sudan Nutrition Policy will pave the way for improved nutrition outcomes and the overall well-being of our nation. Your commitment, expertise, and unwavering support have been instrumental in making the SSNP a reality and will continue to be vital as we embark on its implementation and monitoring.

Dr. Ader Macar Aciek

Undersecretary

Ministry of Health of the Republic of South Sudan

Foreword

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan is firmly committed to upholding its constitutional obligation of ensuring nutrition security for all the people of South Sudan. This commitment stems from our deep understanding of the importance of nutrition in driving the overall development and prosperity of our nation. The Government recognizes the significant impact of malnutrition on health, the economy, society, and national development.

Currently, South Sudan faces critical challenges related to malnutrition. By prioritizing the improvement of nutrition outcomes, we aim to enhance the overall health and quality of life of our citizens. This necessitates a comprehensive policy framework that will establish a legal foundation and accountability system, enabling coordinated action and progress.

The primary objective of the South Sudan Nutrition Policy (SSNP) is to ensure optimal nutrition for all individuals across their lifespan, thereby enabling them to contribute to the country's economic growth and prosperity. The policy prioritizes the prevention and treatment of all forms of malnutrition, community engagement, improvement of the enabling environment, institutional strengthening, and the enhancement of information systems, evidence generation, and knowledge management.

The SSNP's policy framework is guided by principles such as a life cycle approach, genuine multisectoral collaboration, equity, and gender responsiveness. Community engagement, evidence-based approaches, and innovation are also emphasized.

The success of the SSNP depends on the active engagement and collaboration of all stakeholders, including line ministries, development partners, academia, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Through collaborative efforts, we can collectively strive to achieve optimal nutrition for all, making a significant contribution to the overall well-being and prosperity of our nation.

The success of the SSNP also relies on strong coordination and integration with existing policies and programs related to health, agriculture, livestock, education, WASH, gender, and the like. By aligning efforts and leveraging synergies, we can maximize the impact of our interventions and ensure a comprehensive and sustainable approach to nutrition security.

I express my heartfelt appreciation to all stakeholders whose unwavering support and active engagement have been instrumental in the successful development of this policy framework. Your contributions have been invaluable in shaping the future of nutrition in South Sudan. Sustaining and strengthening this collaboration is crucial for achieving the objectives outlined in this policy framework.

The SSNP will be implemented over ten years, from 2023 to 2033. It will be co-owned and co-led by all key government sectors and agencies, spearheaded by the Ministry of Health.

In conclusion, the South Sudan Nutrition Policy stands as a crucial roadmap for tackling the complex challenges of malnutrition in our country. With its comprehensive approach and targeted strategies, I am confident that the SSNP will pave the way for significant improvements in nutrition outcomes for all South Sudanese.

I am optimistic that with the commitment and dedication of all stakeholders involved, the South Sudan Nutrition Policy will bring about positive and lasting change. It will not only improve the nutritional status of our population but also contribute to the overall well-being, productivity, and prosperity of our nation. Let us forge ahead with determination, knowing that by achieving optimal nutrition for all, we are building a stronger and healthier South Sudan for generations to come.

Hon. Yolanda Awel Deng Juach

Minister

Ministry of Health of the Republic of South Sudan

1 Introduction and Background

South Sudan has made some progress in addressing the issue of undernutrition, but there is an ongoing need to enhance the coverage, continuity, intensity, and quality of interventions to effectively combat stunting, wasting, and other forms of malnutrition throughout the country. The progress made in addressing undernutrition has been slow, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach involving all sectors and levels of government. In response to this need, the South Sudan Nutrition Policy (SSNP) has been developed as a comprehensive framework to combat all forms of malnutrition. The SSNP takes a multifaceted approach, with a strong emphasis on prevention as the primary strategy.

A Highlight of Key Challenges

According to the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS), South Sudan faces significant challenges in terms of food security and nutrition. More than half of the population in South Sudan experiences high levels of food insecurity, and nearly a third of children under five years of age are affected by stunting. Additionally, Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) among children is at a critical level, with just below 16 percent of children affected, according to the classification by the World Health Organization (WHO). (FSNMS, July

2021). Moreover, micronutrient deficiencies are also a significant concern in the country. However, the lack of available data has hindered the proper recognition and understanding of the extent of these deficiencies in South Sudan.

South Sudan faces numerous challenges in combatting malnutrition. These challenges are rooted in a combination of factors including limited access to food due to conflicts, climate change, displacement, and high levels of poverty.

According to the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) report from July 2021, South Sudan faces significant challenges related to food consumption, dietary diversity, breastfeeding practices, and access to water and sanitation. Key findings include poor food consumption scores in 41% of households, suboptimal dietary diversity in over 70% of households, and exclusive breastfeeding rates at 51%. The minimum acceptable diet stands at a low 5.9%, and only 32% of women meet the minimum dietary diversity requirements.

Widespread poor access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, combined with a high prevalence of food insecurity, has had a detrimental impact on the health and nutrition of the most vulnerable populations. Only 27% of households have

access to sanitation facilities, highlighting the need to ramp up sanitation infrastructure and promote good hygiene practices. Nearly 70% of households do not have access to safe drinking water. (FSNMS, July 2021).

Rising food prices combined with disruptions to livelihoods have put millions in South Sudan at greater risk of food and nutrition insecurity. (FSNMS, July 2021). At the same time, growing inequalities further shift the burden of malnutrition to the poorest and most vulnerable, who are inherently impacted by the deprivation of structural poverty. (WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021, Draft November 2016). Additionally, some cultural practices and beliefs contribute to the persistence of malnutrition.

While there are several policies, strategies, and action plans related to nutrition, they do not sufficiently address the issue, and there is a lack of a comprehensive policy framework to tackle the underlying and root causes. This challenge is further exacerbated by a universal lack of capacity in terms of systems, skills, knowledge, and resources.

The Imperative for South Sudan Nutrition Policy

SSNP is a comprehensive and multi-sectoral plan designed to guide government efforts to minimize the prevalence of malnutrition across the country, including reducing the high levels of stunting and wasting. It is

designed with the conviction that malnutrition, and specifically, undernutrition along with the response to it, must be viewed as one important manifestation of a larger development challenge and is critical for achieving the country's development aspirations.

This policy framework is designed to target a wide range of stakeholders including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, nutrition and healthcare providers, academics, researchers, the private sector, and individuals. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration and coordination between these entities to achieve a sustainable reduction in malnutrition rates. The policy encourages active participation and engagement from all sectors to ensure a collective effort to address malnutrition and promote optimal nutrition in South Sudan.

Through providing a roadmap for improving the nutrition situation in South Sudan, SSNP also contributes to achieving global targets such as those of the World Health Assembly nutrition targets and the Sustainable Development Goals, to which South Sudan is a signatory.

2 Linkages with Existing Policies

A shared policy and strategy is essential to avoid silos, create synergies among sectors, and accelerate progress

in nutrition. The South Sudan Nutrition Policy (SSNP) is a comprehensive policy that outlines the government's plans to improve nutrition among [vulnerable groups](#) in the country. The SSNP is aligned with the national development agenda and sectoral policies, such as the Revised South Sudan National Development Strategy, the National Health Policy, School Health Policy, and Gender Policy. This alignment ensures that SSNP is complementary to other efforts to improve the well-being of South Sudanese people and that it will operate in line with the existing legal and policy frameworks both at national and global levels.

The Constitution: The South Sudan Nutrition Policy is firmly protected and aligned with the Bill of Rights of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011. It draws its strength from constitutional provisions such as Section 16 (c), which mandates all levels of government to provide maternal and child care, and Section 17 (1), affirming every child's right to life, survival, and development. Additionally, Article 31 emphasizes the duty of the government to promote public health, and provide free primary health care, and emergency services for all citizens. These constitutional guarantees form the basis for the South Sudan Nutrition Policy, ensuring the well-being and rights of individuals across the nation. South Sudan's commitment to the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and

Malnutrition underscores the importance of protecting this policy framework.

SSNP is also well aligned with **Vision 2040** which has favorable provisions for a multisectoral nutrition policy development. Strategic Goals 4.2 and 4.6 make provisions for food security, reducing maternal and child mortality, strengthening the health system, and improving WASH services across the nation – all of which are directly aligned with the goals and objectives of the policy. The Revised National Development Strategy (RNDS 2021 – 2024) shares common concerns and priorities with the SSNP. Notably, the RNDS emphasizes challenges related to the enabling environment and places importance on enhancing systems, infrastructure, access to quality care, and expanding resource availability.

The South Sudan National Health Policy 2016 – 2026 recognizes the need to provide policy guidance on nutrition, therapeutic feeding, and control of all forms of malnutrition through the Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services (BPHNS). BPHNS makes provisions for universal coverage, equity, quality, promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation perspectives for maternal and child nutrition services that SSNP is well aligned with. There are also clear policy provisions for leadership and governance of nutrition as well as for partnerships and multisectoral collaboration.

The scope of the **South Sudan School Health Policy** includes nutrition services and counseling, as well as other nutrition-related elements of health and WASH. The policy also includes specific provisions to promote and ensure nutrition and school feeding programs, which are also included in the SSNP document.

The National Gender Policy 2013 highlights gender issues in food security and the role played by women in food production and meal preparation. SSNP pays due attention to gender considerations, the role of men, women empowerment, and capacity building in a gender-responsive design to maximize the impacts in alignment with the provisions of the Gender Policy.

3 Purpose and Scope

3.1 Rationale and Scope

Rationale

South Sudan has been implementing programs to address the nutritional needs of the population. The interventions have mainly focused on addressing the immediate needs of treating wasting, with little emphasis on addressing the underlying causes. Furthermore, there is a strong need for improving the cohesion, coordination, and tracking of the implementation of nutrition and related programming. SSNP is designed to provide a legal framework and accountability system for sectors engaged in nutrition-relevant programs to streamline coordinated action and enhance progress. It provides a valuable roadmap for reducing all forms of malnutrition in South Sudan.

Scope

A comprehensive nutrition policy that encompasses a broad, multi-sectoral approach is crucial for addressing the nutritional needs of the entire population in South Sudan. It involves all levels of government and aims to tackle malnutrition from a conceptual framework perspective.

By adopting a multi-sectoral approach, this nutrition policy engages various sectors such as health,

agriculture, livestock, education, water and sanitation, social protection, and others to collectively address the underlying causes of malnutrition. This ensures that efforts are coordinated and resources are maximized for enhanced outcomes.

Furthermore, this policy is designed to cover all segments of the population, with a focus on vulnerable groups. By prioritizing inclusivity, the policy ensures that no one is left behind in accessing essential nutrition services and interventions.

The conceptual framework of malnutrition provides a holistic understanding of its causes and consequences. By adopting this framework, SSNP will pave the way for sustainable improvements in nutrition outcomes across the country.

SSNP is, thus, a comprehensive nutrition policy with a broad scope that involves all sectors of government and addresses the needs of all population groups.

3.2 Guiding Principles

With an overall emphasis on optimal nutrition and a strategic shift towards prevention, the successful implementation of this policy will be guided by the following guiding principles:

Life-cycle approach: The policy adopts a lifecycle approach with particular emphasis on the first 1,000 days of life (from conception to the second birthday).

Multisectoral approach: Nutrition is a multifaceted issue. Successful implementation requires a government-led multisectoral approach with a holistic systems strategy to achieve transformative changes.

Gender-responsiveness: Upholds emphasis on prioritizing gender-responsive and transformative actions.

Community participation and empowerment: Promotes community participation, ownership, and empowerment for long-term sustainable outcomes and in bringing about desired changes in knowledge, behaviors, and practices.

Evidence-based approach: Promotes evidence-informed decision-making, learning, and innovation as the foundation of designing strategies and programs.

Innovation: SSNP embraces nutrition innovation as a key driver towards addressing malnutrition and promoting optimal nutrition of the population.

A focus on equity: ensuring that nutrition services are equitably distributed to reach the most [vulnerable groups](#).

3.3 Key Priorities

The SSNP 2023–2033 will focus on the following key priorities from which the goal and objectives of the policy evolve:

- i. Prevention of all forms of malnutrition – stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity
- ii. Treatment and control of wasting, nutritional edema, and micronutrient deficiencies.
- iii. Enhance community engagement and ownership
- iv. Enhancing the enabling environment through cultivating a supportive ecosystem to strengthen nutrition governance and multisectoral coordination, reinforce political will, and increase government allocation of resources for nutrition.
- v. Institutional strengthening, specifically by enhancing the operational capacities of systems at all levels, including skilled human resources for nutrition.
- vi. Enhancing nutrition information systems, knowledge management, and the evidence base for effective nutrition programming, emphasizing learning what works, what does not work, and innovations.

4 Policy Vision, Goal, and Objectives

4.1 Vision

A South Sudan free from all forms of malnutrition, where the population live healthy, productive, and dignified lives!

4.2 Goal

To ensure that all people in South Sudan have optimal nutrition at all stages of life, enabling them to contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of the country.

4.3 Policy Objectives

The SSNP is expected to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Enhance service delivery to prevent and treat undernutrition among children under five, school-age children, adolescents, women of reproductive age group (WRA), displaced populations, and other vulnerable groups.
- ii. Prevent and manage nutrition-related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

- iii. Enhance participation, ownership, and empowerment of the community and active engagement in all matters that pertain to improved nutrition.
- iv. Strengthen the enabling environment through improved governance systems and positioning nutrition as a priority development agenda for South Sudan.
- v. Strengthen capacities for nutrition education, training, research, and innovations.
- vi. Strengthen information systems, knowledge management, monitoring, and evaluation for evidence-informed decision-making.

The subsequent sections of this policy document will delve deeper into specific policy directions and strategies to achieve the outlined objectives.

5 Policy Directions and Strategies

The following policy statements aim not only towards immediate relief from current crises but also long-term sustainability by focusing on underlying systemic issues contributing to poor nutrition outcomes in South Sudan.

5.1 Service Delivery

A strong and sustainable service delivery platform plays a critical role in advancing nutrition. In South Sudan, government ownership of nutrition services needs to be strengthened, as nutrition is currently regarded as a

health issue and left mainly for partners to address. And, the service delivery platform for nutrition, including systems, capacities, and infrastructure for preventive and curative services, is weak and fragmented. Consequently, preventive nutrition services that require a coordinated effort of all relevant sectors, and the treatment of acute malnutrition (wasting and nutritional edema) within the health system have been less than optimal. By ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality nutrition services and by ensuring linkages between sectors, the Government of the Republic of South Sudan commits to preventing and treating undernutrition, reducing obesity and related chronic diseases, and improving overall health.

Optimizing the Service Delivery Platform

Nutrition service delivery platforms should be accessible to people in all settings, including rural areas and remote (hard-to-reach) communities. The Government commits to improving sustainable access to a range of services such as nutrition education, counseling, supplementation, and treatment through its health facilities, while also advancing integration of services and fostering linkages with other sectors. The SSNP encourages innovative approaches to improve access to high-quality nutrition services while promoting the use of technologies where appropriate.

5.1.1 Systems and Structures for Service Delivery

In South Sudan, nutrition service delivery encounters challenges related to access, quality, and capacity. Limited infrastructure, resource constraints, and remoteness of locations impede access to nutrition services. Enhancing service quality amidst workforce shortages and training limitations remains a priority. Addressing these obstacles necessitates strategic planning, collaborative partnerships, and investments in capacity-building to expand and enhance the effectiveness of nutrition service delivery for vulnerable populations.

Policy Statement 1: Ensure that all people at all stages of life have access to high-quality nutrition services.

Strategies:

- *Development of nutrition standards:* Nutrition standards and service delivery protocols/guidelines will be developed/revised to ensure that nutrition services meet the needs of all people.
- *Integration of services:* Promote integration of direct nutrition services with other healthcare services; and coordination of indirect services across different sectors and levels of care.¹

¹ Refer to the Glossary of Terms for descriptions of Direct and Indirect nutrition services.

- *Develop a Comprehensive Nutrition Education and Training Strategy:* to enhance the capacity of frontline workers in delivering high-quality nutrition services, as well as to produce an adequate health workforce to deliver the full spectrum of nutrition services.
- *Strengthen Health Service Infrastructure:* Strengthen infrastructure for delivery of integrated nutrition services; including equipping them with resources needed to manage acute malnutrition.
- *Decentralization:* Strengthen the implementation of a decentralized model for nutrition services to ensure accessibility and coverage for individuals living in remote and hard-to-reach areas.
- *Use of technology to improve services, communication, and coordination:* Technology will be used to improve services, as well as communication and coordination between different sectors and levels of care.

5.1.2 Promotional and Preventive Nutrition Services

To address the nutritional needs of vulnerable groups in South Sudan, it is imperative to promote high-impact and cost-effective nutrition services. This includes optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices, interventions that focus on providing essential

micronutrients to young children, adolescents, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. By prioritizing the delivery of micronutrient-rich foods and supplements, optimal WASH services and practices, as well as optimal feeding practices, we can ensure optimal growth and development during critical stages of life. By prioritizing prevention and adopting a multi-sectoral approach, the policy also focuses on addressing the complex challenges of overweight/obesity and NCDs, leading to improved health outcomes and reduced burden on healthcare systems.

Policy Statement 2: Improve nutritional status and well-being of children through targeted preventive services.

Strategies:

- Protect, support, and promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and other optimal breastfeeding practices.
- Promote complementary feeding using locally available nutritious foods and household food production to ensure nutrient-rich options for infants and young children.
- Promote optimal child feeding practices including care of sick children.
- Enhance and expand school feeding using locally available nutritious foods.

- Enhance curricular and extra-curricular nutrition education and skill-based programs (e.g., school gardens) in schools.
- Promote monitoring of the nutritional status of children (pre-school, in-school, out-of-school) and referral linkages with appropriate health and social protection services.
- Improve access to essential micronutrients and deworming services where appropriate.

Policy Statement 3: Improve maternal and adolescent girls' nutrition through targeted preventive services.

Strategies:

- Implement comprehensive Social and Behavior Change (SBC) programs to promote optimal maternal and adolescent girls' nutrition.
- Strengthen interventions that promote healthy maternal nutrition throughout the preconception, pregnancy, and postpartum periods.
- Provide access to essential nutrients, such as iron, folic acid, (or multiple micronutrient supplements), and vitamin A, to pregnant and lactating women.
- Promote nutritional care for adolescent girls.

Policy Statement 4: Promote high-impact preventive nutrition services and interventions among the general population.

Strategies:

- Enhance the availability and accessibility of affordable nutrient-dense foods all year round.
- Promote nutrition-sensitive farming to improve dietary diversity.
- Promote food fortification and consumption of fortified foods.
- Enhance the availability of micronutrient supplements.
- Promote optimal WASH services and practices in households, schools, and communities.
- Expand social protection programs to ensure vulnerable community members have adequate dietary intake.
- Address the underlying and basic causes of malnutrition, such as poor maternal and childcare practices, food insecurity, poor sanitation, and poverty.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and the consumption of healthy diets among the general population.
- Promote programs on the prevention and management of diet-related NCDs.

5.1.3 Curative Nutrition Services

The Government of South Sudan recognizes that acute malnutrition (wasting and nutritional edema) is a serious public health problem that can have devastating consequences for children and their families.

Micronutrient deficiencies also pose serious health challenges although there is no data to define the magnitude of the problem. To address these problems, the Government commits to providing high-quality curative nutrition services that are accessible to all people.

Policy Statement 5: Provide timely and effective treatment for wasting, nutritional edema, and micronutrient deficiency diseases.

Strategies:

- Support the implementation of the full package of Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM).
- Expand the reach and coverage of CMAM services across South Sudan including increasing access to health facilities with CMAM services in both urban and rural areas.
- Promote high-quality curative nutrition services by adhering to internationally recognized protocols and guidelines.
- Promote the integration of curative nutrition services with other health services to ensure that individuals with wasting and other forms of malnutrition have access to the full range of services they need.

- Enhance access to nutrition care and support services for patients with TB, HIV, and other debilitating chronic diseases.
- Invest in building the capacity of the health system to provide curative nutrition services such as infrastructure, supply chain, and human resources.

5.1.4 Linkages with Other Sectors

Malnutrition is a complex problem that requires a comprehensive approach. To address this, the Government commits to strengthening the linkages between nutrition services and other systems, such as health, WASH, education, agriculture, livelihoods, gender, and social protection.

Policy Statement 6: Strengthen the integration of nutrition objectives into existing programs and services of relevant sectors.

Strategies:

- In the health sector, integrate nutrition into routine health care services, such as antenatal care and child health services.
- Enhance collaboration between nutrition and WASH sectors at all levels including promoting investment in WASH infrastructure development and hygiene promotion campaigns in vulnerable communities.

- Foster the integration of nutrition services into school feeding programs and the education system.
- Promote the integration of nutrition services into agricultural and livestock extension programs.
- Promote the integration of nutrition services into livelihoods and social protection programs.
- Develop a national nutrition strategy that incorporates the linkages between nutrition and other sectors.
- Promote policies and resilience programs that include measures aimed at building households' resilience against recurrent shocks such as droughts, floods, and conflicts.

5.2 Human Resources for Nutrition

There is a global consensus on the essential actions that effectively address malnutrition. However, in South Sudan, the workforce needed to promote and implement those actions is insufficient. This policy lays out clear policy directions to strengthen human resources for nutrition in South Sudan with the ultimate goal of increasing the number and quality of formally trained health and nutrition professionals as well as frontline workers. A clear policy direction is required to ensure effective training and development programs. These programs will address both pre-service and in-service training, with an emphasis on equipping

individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to promote optimal nutrition services.

5.2.1 Preservice Training

Preservice training is the first step in providing nutrition service providers with the knowledge and skills they need to provide appropriate care. SSNP promotes multisectoral “systems thinking” for the development of a nutrition workforce that is capable of delivering services across health, agriculture, WASH, and other social sectors.

Policy Statement 7: All preservice training programs for health and nutrition care providers should include a comprehensive curriculum on nutrition.

Strategies:

- Developing national curricula for training of nutrition cadres.
- Foster the development and incorporation of nutrition curricula for preservice training of health care providers, agriculture, WASH, and other relevant cadres.
- Partner with universities and other training institutions to develop and deliver nutrition training programs.
- Collaborate with other countries (regionally and globally) on training and capacity building of the nutrition workforce.

- Foster the development of a national system for the accreditation of nutrition training programs.

5.2.2 Inservice Training

Human resource capacity gaps affect the quality of services rendered to the community. Cognizant of this, the Government sets out to strengthen continuous professional development programs to enhance the skills of existing health cadres in the field of nutrition.

Policy Statement 8: To ensure that all nutrition and health care providers have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality nutrition services.

Strategies:

- Support the development and standardization of training materials and resources for nutrition care.
- Promote competency-based in-service training to help the nutrition workforce plan, implement, and monitor multi-sectoral nutrition programming.
- Promote the training of Health and Agriculture extension workers to provide nutrition services in their communities.
- Promote the use of innovative methods of training such as distance learning and mobile health.

5.3 Nutrition Information Systems

Nutrition information systems play a vital role in improving nutrition. The system provides essential information that can be used to plan, implement, and evaluate nutrition programming. The NIS also helps to raise awareness of the major issues and to promote evidence-based decision-making.

The current Nutrition Information System (NIS) used in the humanitarian sector is serving its purpose in informing decisions for emergency response. However, several challenges must be overcome to improve its functionality and use. The District Health Information System (DHIS2) is designed to capture routine service data but has several limitations. Overall, parallel reporting, data quality, data use, capacity, and infrastructure-related issues stand out to be the major stumbling blocks for the system's efficiency.

The lack of a policy framework to guide nutrition information systems has impeded the ability of South Sudan to effectively address nutrition challenges. Furthermore, there is limited effort in research and new knowledge generation. The Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) has been key in informing some of the national programs. However, it has a humanitarian focus and, hence, has not been adequate in supporting evidence-based programming for long-term national policy priorities.

Having a comprehensive policy framework would help to streamline the systems, ensure that data is collected and used efficiently, and communicate nutrition information effectively to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. The policy framework would also help to ensure that nutrition information is managed and used in a way that is consistent with national priorities and goals. To achieve this, SSNP will focus on the following:

5.3.1 Nutrition Information and Data Systems

Policy Statement 9: The government of South Sudan emphasizes the importance of nutrition information and data systems for improving the nutritional status of the population. To this end, the government commits to:

- Strengthen and streamline the national nutrition information system with data on nutritional status, services, and other nutrition-related indicators.
- Strengthen the linkages of nutrition information systems of a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach.
- Improve the quality of nutrition data by ensuring that data collection is standardized and consistent.

- Increase access to nutrition data to stakeholders, including policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners.
- Promote the use of nutrition data to inform decision-making and to improve the effectiveness of nutrition interventions.

Strategies

To achieve these commitments, the government will implement the following strategies:

- Develop a comprehensive information systems strategy for nutrition.
- Strengthen nutrition surveillance, analysis, and timely decision-making
- Strengthen the capacity of national and state institutions to collect, analyze, interpret, and use nutrition data.
- Facilitate the sharing of nutrition data among different stakeholders.
- Promote the use of nutrition data for decision-making at all levels of government.
- Promote the development of an integrated database and a common results framework to track progress on the multisectoral aspects of malnutrition.

- Enhance the use of technologies to improve the quality, timeliness, and user-friendliness of data and reporting.

5.3.2 Research, Learning, and Innovation

Research, learning, and innovation in nutrition play a critical role in shaping policies and appropriate responses. The 2021 Lancet series emphasizes that adaptive learning, including ascertaining what does not work, is needed to catalyze progress. Hence, research initiatives geared towards learning what does not work in the South Sudanese context are as important as learning what works. Investment in these areas is crucial to achieving the goal of improving the nutritional status of the population.

Policy Statement 10: The government of South Sudan is committed to investing in nutrition research, learning, and innovation.

Strategies:

- Establish a national nutrition research center, embedded in a higher education institution, to conduct and/or coordinate nutrition research.
- Foster nutrition research and strengthen linkages between research and services, including research to improve access to nutrition services.
- Establish nutrition research capacity and periodically

conduct population-based surveys such as Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) to define the social and economic determinants of malnutrition in South Sudan, and to track progress on a host of indicators related to nutrition.

5.4 Private Sector Engagement

5.4.1 Public-Private Partnership

The private sector has a unique set of skills and resources that can be leveraged to improve the nutritional status of the population of South Sudan. The success of SSNP hinges on the private sector's active participation in the food industry, commercial farming, food imports, food processing, and fortification. Based on the policy directions outlined below, the government will engage the private sector as a valuable partner in the fight against malnutrition.

- ***Promote public-private partnerships (PPPs):*** PPPs can be a valuable tool for the government to leverage the resources and expertise of the private sector to improve nutrition. The government engages the private sector to develop and implement PPPs with particular emphasis on food fortification that provides micronutrients to all segments of the population.
- ***Strengthen the capacity of the private sector to***

address nutrition. Ensure engagement of the private sector in nutrition programming through awareness creation, training, and improved knowledge on nutrition, food safety, and marketing of nutrition-sensitive/healthy products and services.

- **Establish a standing platform to engage the private sector:** The government will partner with the private sector through the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network, National Trade Unions, and Farmers' Unions to create a forum for exchanging ideas and developing joint plans of action to improve nutrition and leverage resources.
- **Create a favorable business environment:** The government will create a favorable business environment for the private sector to invest in nutrition.

5.4.2 Legal Framework for Private Sector Engagement

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan establishes a legal framework for the private sector engagement with specific emphasis on:

- Developing standards to support high-quality commercial food fortification initiatives.
- Enforce food quality and safety standards, and strengthen regulatory bodies to ensure that all food products, whether locally produced or imported,

meet the standards.

- Develop and enforce the Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes (the BMS Code).

5.5 Cross-Cutting Issues

5.5.1 Community Engagement

Policy statement 11: The Government of South Sudan recognizes the importance of community engagement in the fight against malnutrition. The government will work with communities to identify their needs and priorities and to develop and implement nutrition interventions that are tailored to their specific circumstances.

Strategies:

- Empower communities by involving them in the design, delivery, and evaluation of nutrition services to ensure that services are relevant and responsive to their needs.
- Develop a community engagement framework that outlines the principles and processes for engaging with communities. The framework will ensure that community engagement is inclusive, participatory, and transparent.
- Support community-led initiatives to improve nutrition. This support can take the form of funding, technical assistance, and/or training.

5.5.2 Gender

Women are the primary caregivers in most societies, and when they are not healthy, their children are less likely to be healthy. This can lead to a cycle of malnutrition that can have devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities. In South Sudan, harmful traditional practices such as early child marriage forced marriage, and Gender Based Violence (GBV) play a significant role in the health and nutritional status of women and girls. The urgent need to address the detrimental impact of early child marriage and GBV on nutrition outcomes is underscored by the underlying factors of gender inequality, limited access to educational opportunities, insufficient awareness regarding nutrition, economic disadvantage faced by women and girls, and inadequate access to healthcare services. These factors contribute significantly to the nutritional consequences of early child marriage and GBV, necessitating comprehensive strategies to tackle these issues effectively.

Cognizant of this, the Government will promote gender empowerment and protection programs to enhance women's and girls' nutritional status and well-being. More specifically, the Government will:

- ***Empower women in agriculture:*** Empowering women in agriculture will improve their access to resources, their decision-making power, and their

income – paving the way for improved nutrition of the family.

- ***Empower women and girls*** by improving their access to information, education, healthcare services, and economic opportunities.
- ***Promote technologies*** that reduce workload for women to curtail the brunt of unpaid care work that can limit their ability to participate in income-generating activities and improve their families' nutritional status with more income.
- ***Address the gender and sociocultural factors*** that impact the nutritional status of adolescents, mothers, infants, and young children.
- ***Empower and encourage men*** to take an active role in maternal and child care and household chores.

5.5.3 Climate Change

Climate change is a major threat to food security and nutrition in South Sudan. Both the frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures are on the rise making it difficult for farmers to cultivate their land. Diseases and pests that are associated with climate change are also likely to increase, further threatening food security.

Adaptation strategies that enhance the resilience of farming communities to climate change are critical for the realization of the principal objectives of the SSNP.

Some of the key climate adaptation strategies include promoting climate-smart agriculture, restoring ecosystems, pest and disease control measures, and disseminating climate-resilient practices. Additionally, strengthening early warning systems, building climate-resilient infrastructure, and facilitating access to climate finance are important measures. These strategies aim to address the challenges posed by the rising frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures, helping farmers sustain agricultural activities and mitigate the risks associated with climate variability.

6 Strengthening the Enabling Environment

6.1 Nutrition Governance and Multisectoral Coordination

Nutrition is a multisectoral issue that necessitates a multisectoral governance and coordination mechanism. Cognizant of this, SSNP provides a policy framework for multi-sectoral governance at all levels of government. At the national level, there will be a Nutrition Governance Body mandated with overall decision-making and leadership responsibilities, including endorsing multi-year domestic resource allocation, developing a common results framework, and enforcing accountability among all signatory sectors. The nature,

composition, and reporting/chairing structures of this governance body will be determined through a consultative process among signatory sectors, to be convened by a high-level political appointee, such as the cabinet Affairs minister.

The Governance Body will be backed by an equally strong Technical Committee drawn from the signatory sectors, academia, the UN, donors, civil society/implementing partners, and the private sector. The Technical Committee can create subcommittees to address specific areas of need.

Sub-national multi-sector structures will be aligned with the national governance structure to ensure effective nutrition governance and, vertical and horizontal coordination.

6.2 Institutional Arrangements

The Government acknowledges that the successful implementation of this policy will require the cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders. These stakeholders have a shared interest in improving nutritional outcomes and have a variety of skills, resources, and expertise that can be leveraged to achieve the policy's objectives. Under the overall strategic guidance and leadership of the envisioned Nutrition Governance Body, the following key

stakeholders will play their respective parts in the implementation of this policy framework.

The Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health (MoH) plays a vital role in the implementation of the SSNP and it remains to be the overall lead agency until the envisioned governance body is established. The key roles of MoH will include: leading the development of evidence-based policies, strategies, and guidelines; coordinating and collaborating with other ministries and stakeholders to ensure a multi-sectoral approach to nutrition; building the capacity of healthcare professionals and stakeholders involved in nutrition services; monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the SSNP; advocating for resources and raising awareness about the importance of nutrition; and delivering essential nutrition services such as screening, therapeutic feeding, nutrition education, and counseling. These roles collectively contribute to the successful implementation of the SSNP and the improvement of nutrition outcomes in South Sudan.

Drug and Food Control Authority

The Drug and Food Control Authority (DFCA) of South Sudan is an independent regulatory body that ensures the safety and quality of food and other products essential for good nutrition. As part of the implementation of the SSNP, the DFCA ensures the

safety, quality, and efficacy of drugs, micronutrient supplements, and food products intended for human consumption. The DFCA oversees food fortification, food manufacturing processes, and supply chains. It also oversees the promotion, marketing, advertising, distribution, and utilization of these products. The DFCA's involvement in the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SSNP strengthens the overall governance and regulatory framework in South Sudan.

Line Ministries

Line ministries are essential stakeholders in the implementation of the multisectoral policy on nutrition. They will be responsible for translating the policy into action based on their respective mandates. This includes co-leading the policy implementation, being active players in the envisioned Governance Body, mainstreaming nutrition into their respective policies and strategies, allocating adequate resources for nutrition-sensitive programming, and actively participating in the development and implementation of the Common Results Framework to improve accountability.

Academia

Academia and upcoming research centers, if any, will be responsible for conducting nutrition research, generating new knowledge, and disseminating the

findings to inform policy, strategy, and program designs. Academia will also ensure that pre-service education is cutting-edge and relevant to the latest nutrition knowledge so that graduates are prepared to make a difference in the fight against malnutrition.

Development Partners and Non-Governmental Organizations/Civil Society

Development partners will harmonize their nutrition strategies, programs, and financial support with SSNP to ensure that they are complementary and mutually reinforcing. This coordination is essential for avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring that resources are used efficiently. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will play a complementary role to the government in nutrition programming by aligning their interventions with the policy and supporting research, advocacy, communication, and the delivery of a range of critical nutrition interventions. Civil society and NGOs will also play a vital role in monitoring the implementation of the SSNP and ensuring that it is achieving its objectives.

The Private Sector

The private sector plays a crucial role in nutrition by enabling access to healthy, affordable, and sustainably produced food. In doing so, the private sector will align with the objectives of this policy and abide by the standards, rules, and regulations of the Government to

ensure that food safety and quality are met. Private sector entities with direct role in nutrition will have a collective voice and representation at the envisioned Nutrition Governance Body.

6.3 Nutrition Financing

The lack of government financing for nutrition in South Sudan poses a critical challenge. Funding for nutrition in the country continues to shrink as domestic contributions remain minimal and donor funding declines due to rising global priorities. This is preventing the government and partners from scaling up programs to reach the most vulnerable.

Given these challenges of limited government financing and declining donor support, it would be essential to initiate a coordinated evidence-based advocacy plan that aims to improve government financing, maintain donor commitment, as well as placing nutrition as a key development priority for the Government of South Sudan.

During its lifespan, SSNP will strive to achieve:

- ***Increased domestic investment in nutrition:*** The Government of the Republic of South Sudan needs to increase its investment in nutrition to ensure that nutrition programs are sustainable.

- ***Sustained donor commitment*** to continue providing financial support for South Sudan's nutrition programs.
- ***Active involvement of the private sector in financing nutrition*** through investments in commercial farming, food fortification, and food processing technologies.
- ***Stronger accountability mechanisms***: There needs to be stronger accountability mechanisms for nutrition financing to ensure that funds are used effectively and that results are achieved.

7 Implementation Framework

7.1 Partnerships

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan will partner with all relevant stakeholders to achieve the objective of this policy as well as to ensure mutual accountability and transparency. This includes different sectors within the government, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), universities and research institutions, the private sector, and the community at large.

This policy is co-owned by all relevant sectors. By working together, we can pool our resources, share our knowledge, and amplify our impact to improve nutrition in South Sudan.

7.2 Global and Regional Engagement

South Sudan is committed to improving nutrition for its people. It is participating in several global nutrition commitments and initiatives, including the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, the World Health Assembly (WHA) Nutrition Targets, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the African Union (AU) Nutrition Strategy.

The SUN Movement is a global partnership working to accelerate progress towards ending malnutrition in all its forms. The Government of South Sudan will continue to collaborate with the SUN movement secretariat and other international agencies to drive progress in scaling up nutrition interventions.

The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit is a global commitment to end preventable child deaths, fight malnutrition, and ensure universal health coverage by 2030. As a signatory of the N4G Summit, South Sudan remains committed to working with other countries to achieve these goals.

The UN Food Systems Summit aims to address challenges such as poverty, food security, malnutrition, population growth, climate change, and natural resource degradation through the transformation of food systems. As a signatory to the Summit, South

Sudan reaffirms its commitment to implementing policies and initiatives that promote nutrition, food security, and sustainable agriculture.

The Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS) 2015-2025 recognizes the importance of addressing malnutrition comprehensively and in a multi-sectoral manner, which is one of the key principles of the ARNS. Both the SSNP and ARNS prioritize improving nutrition outcomes through coordinated efforts across sectors such as health, agriculture, WASH, education, and social protection. They emphasize the need to strengthen nutrition governance, enhance capacity building, and promote evidence-based interventions. By aligning with the ARNS, the SSNP demonstrates its commitment to regional strategies and goals, working towards the improvement of nutrition status and overall well-being of the population in South Sudan.

7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective and efficient implementation of the SSNP depends on accurately tracking progress, measuring performance, evaluating impact, and ensuring accountability at all operational levels. The implementation of this policy should, therefore, be closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and making a positive impact on the nutritional status of the population.

The Ministry of Health will lead the development of a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan with clearly defined and trackable standardized indicators.

The implementation of the M&E plan will be led by the Ministry of Health or a designated Government research center, in collaboration with other stakeholders. The results of the monitoring and evaluation will be used to trigger corrective actions and inform the further development and implementation of the policy framework.

8 Appendix

8.1 Glossary

Vulnerable groups: are populations at higher risk of food insecurity, malnutrition, and other health problems. This includes children under five years of age, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age group, people with disabilities, People Living with HIV and AIDS, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, the elderly, and marginalized communities. Addressing their specific needs is crucial for inclusive development and targeted interventions.

Food security: access by all people at all times to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy living.

Nutrition is the intake of food, considered in relation to the body's dietary needs. It is the science that interprets the interaction of nutrients and other substances in food in relation to the maintenance, growth, reproduction, health, and disease of an organism.

Micronutrients: Essential vitamins and minerals required by the body in minuscule amounts throughout the life cycle. They include minerals such as iron, calcium, sodium, magnesium, zinc, and iodine, and vitamins such as A, B group (such as folate), C, and D.

Malnutrition: Malnutrition, in all its forms, refers to both *undernutrition* (including stunting, wasting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies) and *overweight, obesity*, and other diet-related NCDs. It includes a range of diet-related conditions caused by not having enough calories, nutrients, or quality

(healthy) food, or having too much low-quality (or unhealthy) food.

Undernutrition: Undernutrition is a diet-related condition resulting from insufficient food intake to meet needs for energy and nutrients. It includes being underweight, too short (stunted) or too thin (wasted) for age or height, or deficient in vitamins and minerals (micronutrients).

Underweight is weight-for-age below -2 z-scores of the median WHO growth standards.

Wasting: Children under five years of age who are below minus two standard deviations from the median weight-for-height of a reference population.

Stunting: stunting is defined as below minus two standard deviations from the median height-for-age of a reference population.

Micronutrient Deficiency: Micronutrient deficiencies are caused by inadequate (or insufficient) intake or absorption of one or more vitamins or minerals and lead to suboptimal nutrition status.

Overweight and Obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health. Overweight and obesity are measured by a body mass index greater than 25 and 30 respectively.

Acute Malnutrition: acute malnutrition is characterized by a rapid deterioration in nutritional status over a short period. It includes wasting and nutritional edema. Wasting in children can be measured using the weight-for-height nutritional index or mid-upper arm circumference. There are two levels of severity of acute

malnutrition: moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM): Defined as weight-for-height between minus two and minus three standard deviations from the median weight-for-height for the standard reference population

Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM): weight-for-height below minus three z-scores of the median WHO growth standards, visible severe wasting, MUAC less than 11.5 cm in children 6–60 months old, or presence of bilateral pitting edema.

Nutrition-specific interventions: programs or policies intended to have a direct impact on immediate determinants of nutrition. Nutrition-specific actions can include the promotion of adequate food and nutrient intake; feeding, caregiving, and parenting practices; and prevention of infectious diseases. Examples are breastfeeding promotion, disease management, and treatment of acute malnutrition in emergencies.

Nutrition-sensitive interventions: programs or policies in sectors other than nutrition that address the underlying determinants of fetal and child nutrition and development, and incorporate specific nutrition goals and actions. Sectors include agriculture, health, social protection, early child development, education, and water and sanitation.

Direct/Indirect Nutrition Services: According to the 2021 Lancet Series on nutrition, ‘direct nutrition services’ refers to nutrition outcomes as the primary benefit, whereas ‘indirect’ refers to nutrition outcomes as secondary benefits to avoid confusion among policymakers on what specifically makes sectoral work nutrition-sensitive. The 2021 Series suggests a new framing that

replaces nutrition-specific versus nutrition-sensitive concepts with direct or indirect actions.

Dietary diversity: Dietary diversity (or dietary variety) refers to the variety in the number and type of foods in a person's diet over a reference period. There is no consensus on the optimal standardized measure for dietary diversity. It is also used as a proxy measure for food security, adequacy of energy/nutrient intake, and diet quality.

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