



Republic of Zambia

POLICY BRIEF

HUMAN NUTRITION WORK FORCE IN ZAMBIA

Background

Under the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative, Zambia is expected to scale up its nutrition interventions both in numerical terms and geographical coverage to reach its citizens. Scientific evidence has suggested that reaching population groups with nutrition services could reduce malnutrition substantially. This entails, increasing nutrition workforce to facilitate nutrition service delivery.

During the Nutrition for Growth Summit held in 2013, in London, the Zambian government committed to addressing the gaps in the nutrition workforce in the five key line ministries responsible for implementing nutrition interventions. This is a cardinal pronouncement given the current situation in relation to human resource, specifically in nutrition. To effectively implement food and nutrition related activities, there is need to have in place, highly qualified, skilled and competent human resource.

The need for nutrition human resource

According to the 2013 nutrition workforce report, the number of nutrition personnel in the current work force has been documented to contribute to about 1.8 staff per 100 000 population. Filling the gap of the established position would only raise it to about 2.4 per 100 000 population. This does not disaggregate the numbers in terms of qualifications. Against a total establishment of 342 positions in the public service only 259 are filled up positions leaving unfilled positions at 24 percent. (*Source: DFID, Nutrition workforce planning report, September 2014*).

Unless this situation is urgently addressed, Zambia may not overcome the current nutrition problems. Nutritionists in various sectors are critical. For example, in health, nutritionists/dieticians are critical in curative, promotive and preventive nutrition. In agriculture, while production of food is the focus, there is need to extend the focus to the consumption of locally produced foods for optimal nutritional status of Zambian population. The need for nutritionists in the education sector will help lay the foundation for good nutritional practices early in a person's life for learning, production and future development.



What has been done?

- The first group of students have completed their BSc programme at UNZA and have graduated
- Parliamentary approval to fund additional 2,800 positions for health workers including 43 nutrition related roles paid nutritionist positions were raised from 152 to 193.
- Nutrition support coordinators in the 14 districts and provinces implementing the 1st 1000 MCDPs have been recruited.

What needs to be done?

Government

- Recruitment of additional positions to increase posts for dieticians and nutritionists in the various positions.
- Ensure that provincial hospitals have a BSc dietician and one to be placed at the MOH.
- Continuous support of the mandate of the Health Professionals' Council to ensure that the standards of teaching are adhered to, for production of sound and competent trained nutrition personnel. The support should be extended beyond the government institutions providing Food and Nutrition related courses in light of emerging private institutions offering the same courses.
- To Support the creation of nutrition posts in the line ministries to strengthen the capacity.
- Include an allocation to nutrition in the Bursaries Committee for capacity building.

Non-Governmental Organizations

- Support the harmonization of the nutrition diploma course at NRDC and BSc programmes to reduce the amount of time needed for upgrade of diploma holders to BSc level.
- Facilitate and support the startup of Masters Programme in Nutrition and dietetics within the country to increase the number of people upgrading their qualifications at a reasonable cost.
- Facilitate and support the training of nutrition staff in project management skills for them to implement the nutrition activities effectively.

Private Sector

- Work in harmony with each other to support the initiatives by government and the Non-Governmental Organisations.

Printed with financial support from UNICEF

