

Evidence-based Strategic Briefing Note

Strengthening Local Governance supportive of Food and Nutrition Security in Cameroon

Full Report

April 2020

CDBPS-H



Audience of the Strategic Briefing Note (SBN)

Decision-makers and managers, their collaborators and other parties involved concerned with **food and nutrition security stakes in local governance in Cameroon**.

The reason for writing this SBN

This Strategic Briefing Note has been written to **inform deliberations** on improving food and nutrition security governance, through a **synthesis of evidence** pertaining to the issue and available options to address it.

What is an SBN?

The Strategic Briefing Note is a document that summarizes **global evidence** retrieved from research (from systematic reviews *) and **local data** to inform decision-making process as well as deliberations relating to health policies and programmes.

*What is a systematic review?

A systematic review is a summary report which answers a clearly formulated question using explicit and systematic methods to critically identify, select and assess relevant studies. Data retrieved from various studies can be analysed altogether using meta-analytic techniques.

Executive Summary

Conclusive data presented in this comprehensive report are available as a brief [Executive Summary](#).

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POZ, RMM, NFC, RCB and MN have developed the methodology and written a part of this document. POZ revised the subsequent versions of the document.

Conflicts of interests

None.

Acknowledgements

This Strategic Briefing Note has been produced with the support of the international NGO HKI Cameroon. Responsibility for the writing, review and validation of the contents of this Strategic Briefing Note does not lie with the contributor. The persons cited below made useful comments during the production of this Strategic Briefing Note: the research team of the Centre for Development of Best Practices in Health: *Christine Danielle Evina, Alfred Kume, Yannick Mvodo, Marie Paul Mekongo, Clémence Ongolo.*

Suggested reference

Ongolo-Zogo P, Mba RM, Nkoa FC, Bonono RC, Nsangou MM, Improving the local governance of food and nutrition security in Cameroon, PERLSS-Cameroun Strategic Briefing Note. Yaounde, Cameroon: CDBPS, 2020. www.cdbph.org.

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Key Messages

Hunger and malnutrition are world-class health and socio-economic issues that hinder children's physical and cognitive development. Malnutrition severely affects development with serious and lasting impacts on individuals and their families, communities and countries as well. Gaps in knowledge regarding malnutrition within communities coupled with related erroneous perceptions by actors and fueled by sociocultural backgrounds further sustain this issue. Food insecurity drivers are multifaceted depending on the territories, mechanisms of action, and the prevailing manifestations in each given setting.

Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) is "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". Delivery on this collective task requires good governance devoted to promoting the "right to adequate food" and "social contract" whereby the citizen is the sole power holder. Mutually supportive efforts are therefore needed to improve local governance in favour of FNS to deliver on the following six objectives: (i) coordinate interventions between sectors and agencies, (ii) promote accountability, (iii) enhance food supply, (iv) reinforce community ownership, (v) improve responsiveness towards public demand, and (vi) give precedence to the right to adequate food. Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals institutes good local governance of food and nutrition security as an absolute requirement.

Definitions	
Malnutrition	<i>Deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients under two groups of conditions: (i) undernutrition, which include wasting, stunting, underweight (low weight-for-age) and deficiency in micro-nutrients (vitamins and essential minerals); (ii) overweight, obesity and diet-related non communicable diseases, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke and certain cancers, etc.</i>
Wasting	<i>Low height-for-weight as a result of a recent and severe weight loss due to insufficient dietary intake compared to the needs and/or a disease such as diarrhoea or an infectious disease</i>
Stunting	<i>Low height-for-age of infant and young child as a result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition associated with many factors (poverty, fragile health, poor maternal nutrition, inappropriate feeding and care). Stunting holds children back from reaching their physical and cognitive potential</i>
Overweight	<i>Body mass greater than the height as calculated by the body mass index (BMI), i.e. person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of his/her height in meters (kg/m²). In adult, the BMI is greater than or equal to 25</i>
Obesity	<i>Body mass greater than the height as calculated by the body mass index (BMI), i.e. person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of his/her height in meters (kg/m²). In adult, the BMI is greater than or equal to 30.</i>
Food and nutrition security	<i>Condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This definition comprises four dimensions: (i) physical availability of food, (ii) economic and physical availability of food, (iii) food utilization (the body makes the most of various nutrients and practices associated with intra-household utilization and distribution of food), and (iv) the stability of the other three dimensions over time. Rf. FAO, An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security, CE-FAO, 2008, 4p. Available on: http://www.fao.org/3/aal936f.pdf</i>

Malnutrition and Food Insecurity

Scope of the problem

Hunger and malnutrition are world-class health and socio-economic issues that hinder children's physical and cognitive development. Although present in all countries, women, infants, young children and adolescents are particularly at risk in low-income countries. Today, all countries are faced with a nutrition challenge. Some battle with stunting while others struggle to stem obesity and non-communicable diseases. An ever increasing number of countries are simultaneously facing undernutrition in early childhood, then obesity and non-communicable diseases at the reproductive age. Deficiencies in micro nutrients (iodine, Vitamin A and iron) are a major threat to health and development, particularly to children and pregnant women. In 2015, 159 million of children were affected by stunting and 50 million suffered from wasting, including 16 million from severe stunting.¹ In 2018, 821.6 million people in the world (1 on 9) suffered from hunger, including 513.9 million from Asia and 256.1 million from Africa. Two billion people in the world (26.4%) experienced moderate or severe food insecurity. A new-born out of seven (20.5 million) was underweight. One out of five children aged below five (148.9 million) was stunted, and one child out of fourteen (49.5 million) suffered from wasting. Three hundred and thirty-eight (338) million school-going children and adolescents were overweight and one adult out of eight (672 million) was obese.² **In Africa**, the prevalence of chronic malnutrition in children is as high as 40% in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa,

¹UNICEF-WHO-World Bank, 2015

² 2018 Global Report on Food Security

whereas the global average prevalence is 23%³. **In Central Africa**, 44% of chronically malnourished children are from Cameroon. The majority of these children come from poor families living in rural areas, with mothers who are equally malnourished as a result of low education.⁴ The 2018 Nutritional Anthropometric and Retrospective Mortality survey (SMART) indicates a high prevalence of chronic malnutrition in the Far-North (35.9%), East (35.4%), North (30.6%) and Adamawa (28.7%) regions. A total of 566062 children were concerned, with about half of them (277131) in the Far-North and 156900 in the North. Chronic malnutrition was recorded from birth in 14% of the cases.⁵ Since 2016, the restive situation in the Far-North, on the Eastern border and in the two English-speaking regions fuels food insecurity. In 2018, about sixteen million Cameroonians were food insecure with different prevalence rates across regions as follows: Far-North (28.8%), North (15.9%), West (15.2%), North-West (15.1%), South-West (11.6%), Adamawa (8.1%) and East (5.4%). In addition, about four hundred thousand people were food insecure in stages 3-5 in the South-West (32.3%), Far-North (27.7%), North-West (20.3%) and North (9.3%) regions.⁶

The consequences of malnutrition on social, economic and health development are severe and lasting on individuals and their families, as well as on their communities and their countries. People suffering from undernutrition, children in particular, are more vulnerable to disease bearing a high risk of mortality. Undernutrition accounts for about 45% of deaths among children aged below five in low or middle income countries. Malnutrition increases healthcare expenditures, reduces productivity and slows down economic growth, thus fueling the vicious circle of poverty and poor health.

Underlying Factors of Malnutrition and Food Insecurity

Gaps in knowledge regarding malnutrition within communities coupled with related erroneous perceptions based on sociocultural actors and backgrounds further sustain this issue. Inappropriate infants and young children feeding practices (early and exclusive breastfeeding, introduction of water and food in the nutrition of the infant and young child, poor and monotonous diet, etc.) are justified by poverty, cultures and customs, preferences and gaps in knowledge.⁷ Research carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa identifies many food insecurity drivers, depending on the parsing unit (country, region, household), mechanisms of action, manifestations and backgrounds. **Poverty** is a universal driver of food insecurity which exacerbates the risk and burden of malnutrition. People with no resources are more likely to suffer from hunger and various forms of malnutrition⁸. The economic, commercial, fiscal (laws and regulations), **institutional and political framework** structures agro-pastoral production and its redistribution by influencing the behaviours and interactions of the parties involved, land ownership, market stability, agro-pastoral practices, taxes, socio-political security and safety.⁹ **Critical production factors** (human capital, man-power, land, funding)¹⁰ as well as the volatility of agricultural commodities producer prices compromise the profitability of agro-pastoral investments. Additionally, food insecurity is fostered by difficulties for producers to access inputs (seeds, fertilizers, phytosanitary products, animal feeds and veterinary supplies)¹¹

³UNICEF 2020

⁴WFP 2016

⁵2018 SMART Report, 2019

⁶PNRVA 2018

⁷UNICEF 2020

⁸UNICEF-MINSANTE, 2017; Misselhorn et Hendriks, 2017; Fongnzossie et al, 2018 ; RNDH, 2019

⁹PARM, 2017; Cumber et al 2017; Kam Kah, 2017; Waigalo, 2018; Berlinger, 2018

¹⁰Ouedraogo, 2007

¹¹Ngo Nonga, 2013; PARM, 2017

and the absence or insufficiency of production, storage, conditioning and processing equipment and infrastructure¹². Moreover, certain **farming and techniques and practices** contribute to soil degradation and natural resource depletion. Funding for research in agricultural development and the adoption of new agricultural technologies are constrained¹³. Poor quality **road infrastructure** hinders agricultural productivity by limiting technology transfers and access to factors and product markets (Doukkali, 2017). Deteriorated infrastructure limit supply to landlocked areas (Pemunta, 2015) and cause produces to be dumped as a way to avert transportation costs and post-harvest losses, as well as price hikes resulting from transportation costs incurred. (Berlanger, 2018). However, good quality road infrastructure can equally contribute to malnutrition by encouraging the sale of the agricultural produces, allowing no backup of food stocks necessary for the nutrition of local populations. Some localities in the West region and Ayos Council in the Centre region are textbook examples (Fosso, 2015). **Climate change** influences the quality and the quantity of foodstuffs produced, and drives environmental disasters (Phalkey, 2015; Myers, 2017; PARM, 2017; Kalu, 2018). Overpopulation and rapid growth exert pressure on food supplies (Berlanger, 2018; Kalu, 2018) and the working population is a labour force for agriculture (Ouedraogo, 2007). **Sociocultural factors** are multifaceted. Beliefs, practices and ideologies that determine people's diets (Johnson-Hanks, 2003) are based on prevailing local norms and logics which are not always rational (Pemunta, 2015; Massamba, 1996; UNICEF-MINSANTE, 2017). The monotonous diet rooted in traditional preferences and prohibitions (UNICEF-MINSANTE, 2017; Nsangou, 2018), the uniformity of household diet regardless of the categories (children, pregnant or nursing women), unequal household distribution of food (Droy, 2014) are common. The community aspect of child feeding pattern, the rejection of colostrum considered harmful, non-exclusive breastfeeding, sudden weaning and forced-feeding (Mignot, 2002; Kakute, 2005; Boukar, 2008; Pemunta, 2015; UNICEF-MINSANTE, 2017) influence nursing practices. Acculturation and marginalization seem to be food insecurity factors of the Baka (Fongnzossi, 2018). **The approximate implementation of WASH strategy** is associated with malnutrition, particularly poor hygiene, inadequate access to drinking water and lack of sanitation (MINSANTE-UNICEF, 2017; Momberg, 2019). **Access to health services is limited** in the East, North and Far-North regions due to low-skilled offer in health care and services, and the existence of geographical and financial barriers (Pemunta, 2015; PNSA-PAM, 2016). **Irregular quality control of products** is justified by the lack of pertaining resources. Risks of chemical contamination of food items are established owing to urban agricultural practices (Lekeanju, 2016) and the widespread use of harmful preservatives in the markets of Yaounde (Bonono, 2019). **Humanitarian assistance brings about adverse effects** such as dependency and confusion among the recipient population (Misselhorn, 2017; Nsangou, 2018; Berlanger, 2018) since donors' actions lack synchronization (PRESEC, 2018).

At the household level, food and nutrition insecurity drivers are many: (i) the mother's marital status and level of education (Grace, 2012; Kalu, 2018); the marital status, gender and level of education of the household head (PNSA-PAM, 2015; Tankari, 2016); the limited size or absence of property (land, livestock, revenues, etc.), the extent of poverty and household composition (Woldehanna, 2010); vulnerability, human capital (knowledge, know-how) and social capital (parents, friends, associations, NGO) (Ouedraogo, 2007; Berlanger, 2018); household size, access to credit, fishing, remoteness from the nearest town or agricultural development hub (Dassou, 2019); advanced age of the household head and the prices of foodstuffs (Wuyeh, 2019).

¹² Waïgalo, 2018

¹³ Doukkali, 2017, Teno, 2018

In conclusion, malnutrition and food insecurity constitute major issues of sustainable human development with diverse and multifaceted causes and manifestations. Dynamics, mechanisms and prevailing conditions in each setting must be taken into account in conducting operational assessment of malnutrition and food insecurity.

United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition

The fight against malnutrition is one of the major challenges to global health. On 1 April 2016, the United Nations General Assembly declared the period *2016-2025 United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition* with the ultimate aim to eradicate all forms of malnutrition. It is an agenda to implement the commitments taken during the Second International Conference on Nutrition to meet the targets relating to nutrition and associated non-communicable chronic diseases by 2025. It comprises a timeline to meet some targets of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals n°2 (end hunger, ensure food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) and n°3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages).

Steered by the WHO and WFP, the *Decade* promotes a strategic action in six key domains (i) establish sustainable and resilient food systems promoting healthy diet; (ii) ensure social protection and sensitization on nutrition for all; (iii) align health systems with nutritional needs and ensure universal coverage of basic nutritional interventions; (iv) make sure that investment and commercial policies improve nutrition; (v) put in place safe and conducive nutrition environments for all ages; and (vi) strengthen and promote governance and accountability in the field of nutrition everywhere.

Fight against malnutrition and food insecurity in Cameroon 2016-2020

Efforts to fight malnutrition and food insecurity are striving to achieve their goals in Cameroon after they had long been fragmented and compartmentalized. For a coordinated and more efficient action, many initiatives have been taken, including: (i) the adoption of a multispectral approach in implementing nutrition interventions, (ii) the commitment of Members of Parliament, (iii) the signing of Conventions and Agreements with development partners, NGO and Associations and (iv) membership in the SUN Movement (Scaling Up Nutrition) in 2013.

In 2016, agencies of the United Nations System and the Government set up a nutrition action plan to address urgent needs, improve nutritional practices and reduce stunted growth. The Humanitarian Response provides emergent food assistance in the form of foodstuffs and/or money transfers, targeting the most vulnerable people (e.g. refugees, internally displaced persons, local host populations). Actions are underway to consolidate what has been achieved in previous interventions through the restoration and promotion of livelihoods. For example, the *Vivres-contre-Actifs* (Goods for Assets) project supports assets creation within target communities in order to preserve and reinforce livelihoods.¹⁴ Thanks to this action plan, the Humanitarian Coalition intends to mobilise about \$ 304.5 million to address the most urgent needs in the 4 priority regions. The target population consists of one million three hundred thousand people (which represents 40% of needy persons). Community-based interventions strengthen the detection and treatment capacities of acute malnutrition in children below 5 years as well as in nursing and pregnant women in inpatient and outpatient treatment. Supply as well as monitoring and assessment mechanisms aim to provide an efficient response. Systems Emergency and Reinforcement approaches are pooled to improve the resilience of the affected populations.

¹⁴ OCHA UN 2018

Government priorities outlined in the National Agriculture Investment Scheme (*PNIA*) constitute the operative phase of the Rural Sector Development Strategy (RSDS) which is rooted in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP). Bodies coordinating the fight against malnutrition are established, including, the interministerial Committee for the fight against malnutrition in the Prime Minister’s Office, ten regional offices coordinated by Governors, 58 divisional offices coordinated by Senior Divisional Officers and 360 municipal offices coordinated by Mayors. Since 2018, the Rural Sector Development Strategy has been implementing the objectives geared towards the sustainable management and valuation of natural resources by improving access to and use of farmland, natural resources development and value enhancement, as well as environment protection and adaptation to climate change.

Progress achieved in the fight against malnutrition is attributed to adherence to the SUN Movement regarding the coordination of actors and advocacy. Since 2018, Helen Keller International (HKI) as the prime mover of SUN civil society platform has been receiving funding from UNOPS to build the capacities of CSOs and local councillors. Efforts made by councils are geared towards improving access to drinking water through the construction of boreholes, equipment of human-powered pumps and the development of drinking water sources. The initiative dubbed “Councils against malnutrition” led thirty mayors to sign letters of commitment pledging to invest at least 1% of their councils’ budget in the fight against malnutrition. Thirty four (34) civil society organizations (SCOs) adhered to the SUN platform in 2019. This platform has trained 36 local SCOs in nutrition, 33 of which have incorporated nutrition activities in their plans of action. One thousand women’s groups received capacity-building in nutrition from the members of the platform.¹⁵ In the East region, 15 mayors created the Communal Network to promote Nutrition in the East region (known under its French acronym as RECENUT) with a view to set up a scheme for planning and budgeting nutrition activities so as to perpetuate what has been achieved from the local governance nutrition project. The table below portrays the parties involved in the fight against malnutrition and food insecurity.

Parties involved	Functions
Ministries: Public Health - Agriculture and Rural Development - Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Livestock Industry - Commerce - Women Empowerment and the Family - Economy, Planning and Regional Development - State Property, Surveys and Land Tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft laws ▪ Set up mechanisms conducive to food security ▪ Carry out an efficient budgeting of identified nutrition activities
Prime Minister’s Office - the interministerial Committee for the fight against malnutrition (CILM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harmonises efforts in favour of food and nutrition security ▪ Leverages the impact of partners’ and government efforts
Regional and Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote the development of agricultural, pastoral and fish farming activities
Helen Keller International (HKI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CSA leader of SUN Movement ▪ Builds the capacities of local councillors and CSOs in nutrition issues
RECENUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preserves what has been achieved in the local governance nutrition project
Global Water Project - Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitates consultations and outline the stakes and challenges relating to water and food and nutrition security

¹⁵SUN Civil Society -Alliance Cameroon, 2019

NGO and Financial Backers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contribute financial resources and expertise
Local and community media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform and sensitise on measures supportive of food and nutrition security
Education community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teach and promote the implementation of measures supportive of food and nutrition security
Village chiefs and members of CIG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Construct storage facilities ▪ Allocate fertile farmlands to populations

Improving the Local Governance of Food and Nutrition Security

Within the implementation framework of Agenda 2030 adopted by 193 countries in 2015, many analyses point out poor governance of food and nutrition security as the main driver which accounts for the failure in achieving the *right to adequate food*. Actually, governance is a set of processes that enable public and private actors to formulate their interests, accurately identify and prioritise their issues, make decisions pertaining thereto, implement these decisions, monitor and evaluate their execution. SDGs provide a window of opportunities to “Transform our world” with a double ambition: *universality*—for all, in all countries – and *integration*—by everyone, in collaboration to achieve the goals.

Political economy and the analysis of the parties involved help to understand the contextual issue of FNS governance. The integrated analysis within the framework of Agenda 2030 shows that universal healthy nutrition is inextricably linked to all SDGs and constitutes the cornerstone of universal health coverage. Equally, nutrition could contribute to five strategic domains that are common to SDGs and leverage from these domains as well: (i) sustainable food production, (ii) reliability of systems infrastructure, (iii) health systems, (iv) equity and inclusion and, (v) peace and stability. As a matter of fact, **good nutrition can induce a better environment protection** since the production of foodstuffs consume 70% of global fresh water resources and uses 38% of lands; similarly, current agricultural practices generate 20% of the overall greenhouse gases emissions and cattle farming uses 70% of arable lands. **Good nutrition increases the cognitive capacities of children, thereby contributing to strengthening future human capital. It equally supports long-term economic development.** Stunting generates the adverse effect since it alters brain development which is essential in building the future and bolstering the economy. **Good nutrition relieves the burden on health systems** whereas health is an integral part of nutrition whose quality influences the disease burden. **Good nutrition supports equity and inclusion** by acting as a performance booster in education, employment, women empowerment and poverty reduction. Children whose diet is balanced have 33% more chance to escape poverty in adulthood. **Good nutrition and better food security advance peace and socio-political stability.** Informed data show that investing in strengthening food and nutrition resilience contributes to reducing unrest and consolidating stability.¹⁶

At the country level, governance highlights the influence on political decision-making of interests, institutions and interactions between populations and authorities beyond strictly technical issues. The variety of actors intervening in the fight against malnutrition and food insecurity on the one hand, and the complexity of contextual drivers on the other hand require the establishment of mechanisms promoting cooperation between actors and the pooling of resources in order to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goals n°1, 2 and 3 relating to food, nutrition and health.

¹⁶ 2017 World Nutrition Report

The United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition is a unique occasion to commit to end all forms of malnutrition. The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* and *Accra Agenda for Action* define five core principles enforceable to subscribers and which should guide any process on development assistance: (i) *Ownership*, recipient countries drive their development policies and strategies themselves and manage their development activities on the field; (ii) *Alignment*, donors align their assistance with priorities indicated in national development strategies of recipient countries; (iii) *Harmonisation*, donors better coordinate their mutual development activities to avoid duplication of efforts and high transaction costs for recipient countries; (iv) *Managing for results*, all the parties concerned with the aid lay more emphasis on results, that is to say, on concrete changes prompted by aid in the life of those less fortunate; (v) *Mutual responsibility*, Donors and recipient countries transparently report to one another on the use of the aid and inform their citizens as well as their parliaments of the impact of their aid.

The good governance of food and nutrition security is structured around two values: (i) the “*right to adequate food*” recognised as a basic and fundamental human right and; (ii) the “*social contract*” in modern societies that establishes the citizen as the sole holder of the power and legitimacy of authorities. The six objectives listed below contribute to FNS good governance: (i) coordinate interventions between sectors and agencies, (ii) promote accountability, (iii) enhance food supply, (iv) reinforce community ownership, (v) improve responsiveness towards public demand, and (vi) give precedence to the right to adequate food. Many frontline actors in the fight against malnutrition admit that an integrated, cross-sectoral and cross-curricular approach is imperative in order to remedy food systems issues at all levels (global, national, local). Ensuring healthy and sustainable food to the population is one of the greatest challenges authorities are faced with wherever they are.¹⁷

Local governance of food and nutrition security is defined as the ability by local institutions and other actors and stakeholders to enshrine the principles of participation, inclusion, transparency, responsiveness and accountability in order to guarantee the *right to adequate food* and the right to the best FNS to all citizens. The inclusive commitment of the parties involved fosters the ownership of initiatives supportive of FNS and creates conditions for sustainability.

Ten components contribute to good governance within organisations and human communities: accountability, transparency, participation, inclusion, responsiveness, consensus-building, the rule of law, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. **Accountability** means a clear description of individual responsibilities, the alignment of mobilised resources with the schedule of selected activities guided by their potential to deliver on the objectives agreed upon by the parties involved. **Transparency** implies accessibility to data and information relevant to all parties involved and to all parties concerned. **Participation** admits that citizens, civil society organisations and associations, local traditional, municipal and administrative authorities have the right to contribute to the choice of priority actions and resource allocation in achieving objectives that benefit the greatest number of people. **Inclusion** requires all social segments, including outcasts, the needy and minorities to be involved in all community processes. **Responsiveness** establishes the principle for the management of public demand in a bid to satisfy the said demand considering the need, the urgency and socio-cultural preferences. **Consensus-building** commits to dialogue and negotiation so that strategic choices can be made without a vote, but relying on the unanimous willingness of the parties involved. **The rule of law** provides that each and everyone be subjected to laws and regulations in force with no preferential treatment or privilege to some. There is no room for laxity nor for laissez-

¹⁷ 2017 World Nutrition Report

faire. **Effectiveness** must be the backbone of public action. Resources are allocated based on a logical model or a theory of change admitted and known by all the parties involved, resource waste being absolutely not accepted. **Efficiency** entails the optimal use of resources to achieve expected results with the minimum of the needed scarce resources available. **Equity** involves a standard-setting aspect which provides that public action should not fuel nor cement disparities among citizens based on their characteristics such as the residency, gender, race, tribe, socio-economic status, job or profession.

Making these components a reality in public action requires the **institution of evidence-informed decision-making mechanisms and processes**. These mechanisms and processes involve the structural analysis of issues considering the extent, underlying factors, consequences, actors' prospects and the effectiveness of policy options, as well as implementation avenues (e.g. barriers, incentives, financial costs, etc.). Evidence come from surveys and research on the one hand, and from administrative management information systems on the other hand. Quality evidence is vital to reach every individual experiencing malnutrition or food insecurity. Such evidence are used to identify people left behind and guide best strategies aimed at improving the coverage and quality of key nutrition interventions targeting children, adolescents and women. Investing in reliable evidence contribute to speed up progress towards achieving global nutrition goals - and all the SDGs targets. Data collected must be assembled, analysed and exploited to make informed choices; to advocate for political decision-making and sustain it; to reinforce necessary dialogue, partnerships, actions and responsibilities in order to end malnutrition in all its forms. To inform stakeholders in food and nutrition in Cameroon, lines of evidence to determine the extent of the issue are, among others, SMART surveys, EDS-MICS, the harmonised scheme for food and nutrition analysis, research works, interventions assessment reports by technical and financial partners. Evidence on efficient interventions and strategies are retrieved from systematic reviews and impact assessments available on dedicated digital database. The analysis of the said evidence confirms good practices as used by regional and local authorities in favour of food and nutrition security.

Ten strategies supportive of NFS for RLAs

1. Establish NFS task force within municipal councils and NFS focal point within municipal administration;
2. Strengthen the local information systems on NFS so as to support evidence-informed decision-making;
3. Institute NFS as a high priority for socio-economic development of the council by incorporating NFS-related activities into the communal development plan;
4. Lead by example during municipal activities and programmes exhibiting local agri-food and pastoral production;
5. Use the regulatory and tax enforcement authority of the council to promote change as regards local production preferences, sanitary quality control of food, support to local production and market supply, education on malnutrition and assistance in the management of malnutrition cases, regulating the use of pesticides and fertilizers, etc.
6. Plan land use to encourage the integration of agro-pastoral production activities, notably, school food gardens, promote sub-urban agriculture, promote home-grown systems for an integrated agro-pastoral production;
7. Encourage adequate feeding and feeding habits change through information and nutritional education actions in schools, associations and women's groups;
8. Promote local food production by sensitising on sustainable production methods, supporting farming methods that preserve soils and water resources, developing road

infrastructure and transport service linking production areas to consumption areas in order to reduce waste and post-harvest losses;

9. Ensure access to foods by securing production and marketing chains notably, road infrastructure maintenance, the construction of accessible markets and warehouses, promotion of local agro-industrial processing
10. Advocate for nutrition and food security by designing a locally integrated NFS information system which generates reliable evidence accessible to the stakeholders and interested parties on the one hand, and by proposing mutually supportive actions targeting malnutrition and development concerns on the other hand ¹⁸

Examples of activities to be promoted using an integrated approach

1. agricultural production diversification can be a supply base for essential nutritious food to fight undernutrition and prevent dietary associated NCDs

2. the choice of micronutrient-rich crops and useful to ecosystems

3. support women as food production actors by providing them with means to become innovative entrepreneurs in the food value chain, while reducing workload and time spent at work

4. access to efficient stoves would improve household dietary health condition as well as lung health, save time, preserve forests and related ecosystems and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

5. well-structured school feeding programmes help to reduce undernutrition, ensure that children are not excessively exposed to food items that increase the risks of obesity, provide income to farmers, and encourage children to go to school and/or increase their learning abilities at school

6. food policies and strategies in urban areas can reduce climate change, food waste, food insecurity and malnutrition

7. Humanitarian assistance can be used as a platform to promote quality and nutritious diets, while strengthening resilience via local institutions and support systems

¹⁸ 2017 World Food Report

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