

# Nutrition Education & Nutrition Education Training in National Policies

*Cristina Álvarez*

*Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness Group, FAO, Rome*



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament  
of the Federal Republic of Germany



# Why policy?



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament  
of the Federal Republic of Germany



# What do the participants think about it?

What are the barriers to greater engagement in policy and practice?

"There is lack of guidance for governments on effective policies and programs & Poor policy alignment (agricultural production & nutritional needs)"

"Nutrition is now very high in the agenda, if we do not take advantage of that it will fall back on us. We should **take the message out there and speak with one voice**"

There is a need for effective implementation of policies

"One of our priorities is to advocate for greater policy support for capacity development for professional training in NE"

"Nutrition is an orphan, it does not belong to anybody"

"NE must be integrated in policies in all sectors: health, agriculture, food and security..."

"No clear NEAC policies that drive NEAC interventions and programmes"



Ms. Ellen Muehlhoff



Prof. Anna Lartey



Ms. Stacia Nordin



Prof. Onimawo

“Policy activities are extremely important to help make the healthful choices the easy ones. They enable changes in systems and social structures to facilitate the enactment of healthful food and activity behaviours. Policy complements education and environmental change”

Rothschild, 1999

## We wanted to know:

- How much attention NE and NE training receive in national policies, their extent and importance
- Location and integration of NE and NE training
- Type of NE and NE training

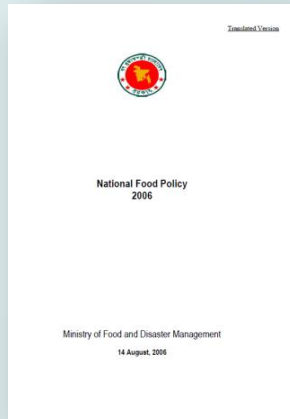
Therefore, we looked at a sample of 10 national food/nutrition/food and nutrition policies from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

# Policy documents reviewed

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>YEAR</b>
<b>Africa</b>		
Kenya	Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (second draft)	2008
Malawi	National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan	2009
Nigeria	National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria	2001
Uganda	The Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy	2003
Rwanda	Rwanda National Nutrition Policy - 2005	2005
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh	National Food Policy Action Plan (2008-2015)	2006
<b>Latin America</b>		
Brazil	National Plan of Food and Nutrition Security – 2012/2015	2011
Costa Rica	National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (2011-2021)	2011
El Salvador	Food and Nutrition Security Policy	2003
Guatemala	National Food and Nutrition Security Policy	2005



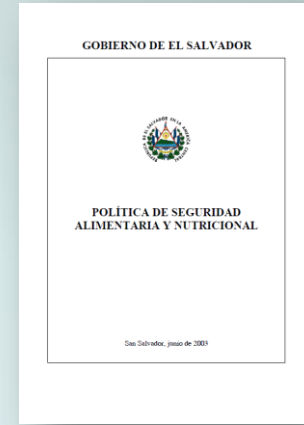
**Brazil**



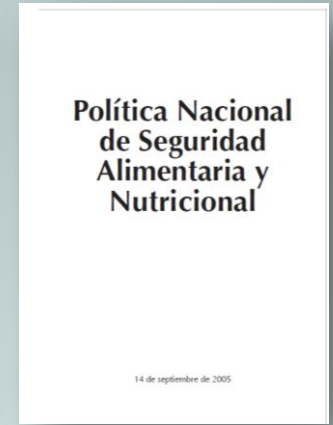
**Bangladesh**



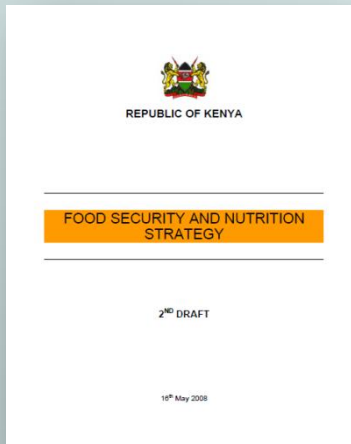
**Costa Rica**



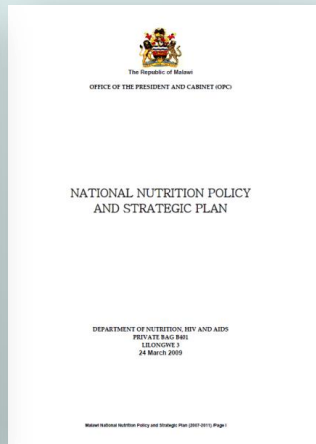
**El Salvador**



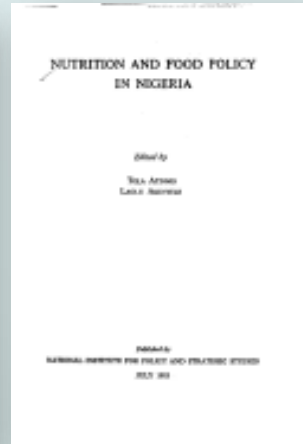
**Guatemala**



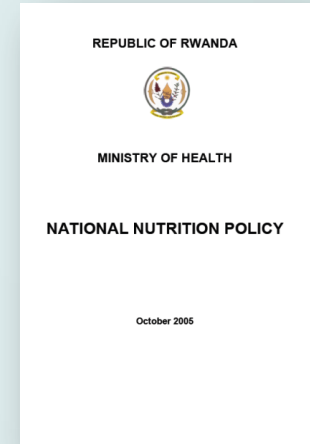
**Kenya**



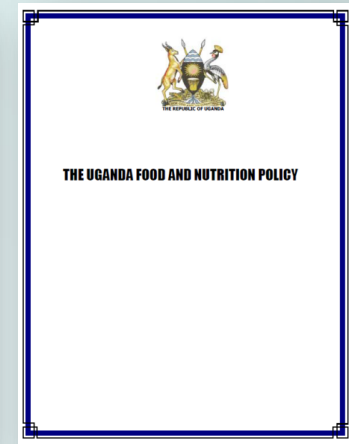
**Malawi**



**Nigeria**



**Rwanda**



**Uganda**

– *Analysis of policy documents* –

## **Policy/strategy/plan of action were analysed according to the following:**

1. Entities involved in the development.
2. Whether NE is explicitly mentioned. Names for NE.
3. Location: institution(s) responsible for coordinating, implementing, monitoring & evaluating NE.
4. Main food and nutrition issues.
5. Objectives (related to NE).
6. Main target groups/beneficiaries of the NE component.
7. Main strategies to address stated food and or nutrition issues that mention NE explicitly or implicitly.
8. Contexts / Current national NE programmes.
9. Capacity building in NE and training institutions.
10. Specific legislation, norms and regulation supportive of promotion of healthy diets/NE.

– *Findings* –

## **1. Who developed the policy/strategy/PoA?**

- In most cases there were developed jointly by various governmental agencies (e.g. Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Social Development).
- In half of the policies the MoE was not involved.

## **2. Is NE mentioned in the policy/strategy/PoA?**

- Yes, in all cases but under various names and to different extents.
- Brazil, El Salvador, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda have specific sections for NE.

**Nutrition education comes under various names:** health promotion, behaviour change communication; information, communication and education; community nutrition, food and nutrition education, etc.

### **3. Location of the NE policy: institution(s) responsible for NE components.**

Specific cases where entities responsible for NE are named:

- **Brazil.** Ministry of Social Development, together with the MoE and other entities.
- **El Salvador.** The Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance is the entity responsible for NE related actions. MoE, MoA, private sector, universities, will support it.
- **Rwanda.** Ministry of Education.
- **Kenya.** Overall nutrition comes under the National Food and Nutrition Steering Committee. For NE related priorities, the responsible bodies are the Ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture; private sector, society organizations, media, institutions of higher learning, etc.

## **4. Main food and nutrition issues.**

*It depends on the country, but in general:*

- High malnutrition rates: stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies.
- High food insecurity, changes in dietary patterns, etc.
- Overweight, obesity and NCD: **Brazil, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria.**

**Issues relating to NE.** *Some examples mentioned:*

- Lack of qualified human resources.
- Lack of practical content and application of food and nutrition in schools curricula.
- Lack of IEC materials.
- Lack of NE is listed as a contributor (together with poverty) to malnutrition in Nigeria.
- The development of IEC materials by different agents is not coordinated and the messages are sometimes conflicting.

## **5. Objectives** (*of NE or related to NE*)

- In most cases objectives aim at raising population's awareness about healthy diets or promoting good diets.
- Only in a few cases they aim at changing attitudes and practices (behaviour change).
- Some aim at capacity building of HR in F&N (not specifically in NE).
- Very broad and imprecise: example:
  - To ensure good nutrition status of men;
  - To ensure that men and women have sufficient time and knowledge to take care of their nutrition needs as well as those of their families.

## **6. Target groups**

- Children, breastfeeding and pregnant women, people living in rural poor areas, schools, communities, the elderly, and the public in general.

## **7. Strategies - *most common ones:***

- Disseminate information about F&N to promote healthy diets.
- Develop information, communication and education programmes/ develop “ideal NE programmes” (?) / develop systematic campaigns of NE.
- Training of human resources in FN.
- Promotion of optimal infant and young child feeding / promotion of breastfeeding.
- Promotion of traditional foods.
- Community activities: shows, demonstrations of food preparation, theatre, etc.

# Strategies

- Generally lack practicality. In most instances, NE is understood as disseminating information about nutrition.
- Only a few policies convey methods of problem solving and learning by experience (e.g. **Brazil, Nigeria and Uganda**) to create competences in individuals.
- Often strategies are not totally in line with the objectives or the issues manifested in the country.
- Use of words: “promote”, “awareness” and “communication”, (they could mean anything!).



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany



## 8. Contexts

- **Communities**
- **Families:** mothers-under five children.
- **Schools.** Costa Rica, El Salvador, Uganda, Nigeria and Brazil recognize the importance of strengthening primary schools curricula with food and nutrition (education ?) components. Brazil mentions that school gardens and school meal programmes are used as pedagogical tools. Same for Kenya re gardens, but they are treated as sources of food, not of education.

### **NE national programmes** - *examples*

- **Malawi,** School Health and Nutrition Education Programme
- **Costa Rica,** Health and School Nutrition Programme

NE is rarely integrated in broad interventions, e.g. food security projects, social development interventions, etc.

## **9.Capacity building in NE and training institutions**

- Very weakly reflected.
- No specific allusions to training in NE, mostly training in food and nutrition.
- Action-oriented training? We can't tell from the documents.
- Disciplines: health/social workers, school teachers, tertiary institutions, etc. In many cases this is not mentioned.
- Level of training: mostly in-service/professional and under grad level.

**10. Specific legislation, norms and regulation supportive of promotion of healthy diets/NE. *Example:***

Costa Rica. Regulation and control of marketing of foods + IEC programme on the importance of healthy eating habits. regulation of food and beverages served in schools and other centers for specific groups (food environment).

**Evaluation.** In most cases there is no reference to independent M&E of NE. National indicators are not listed. No link between objectives-strategies-evaluation.

# - *Comparison tables* -



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany



# Food and Nutrition Education

	From	Through	To
<b>NUTRITION EDUCATION Extent /importance/ role/range</b>	Very little mention or mainly implicit	Quite extensively mentioned but vague (e.g. <i>promotion, communication, IEC, dissemination</i> )	Explicit extensive nutrition education policy & strategic plan in separate doc or section
<b>NUTRITION EDUCATION Integration</b>	In only a few settings – e.g. schools	Slimline services in high-priority arenas (schools, IYCF, FBDLGs, HIV/AIDS)	Extensive educational program Incl. in agriculture, food security & community programs
<b>NUTRITION EDUCATION Quality</b>	Mainly information delivery	Some attempt at activation and follow-up	Full behaviour change approach + practice, maintenance and evaluation

# Food and Nutrition Education Training

	From	Through	To
<b>NUTRITION EDUCATION Extent /importance/ role/range</b>	Very little or none	Some ad hoc training for professionals, planners and extension workers; optional modules in first degrees	Institutionalised training of range of managers, planners, educators and health professionals, including nutritionists
<b>NUTRITION EDUCATION Integration</b>	Within one sector only	More than one group or sector	Across the board, many groups, including NGOs
<b>NUTRITION EDUCATION Quality</b>	Mostly training in nutrition; mostly information-based	Training in NE but mostly good advice and information	Action-oriented, competency-based training with practice of some kind

# Food and Nutrition Education

	FROM	THROUGH	TO
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION EDUCATION</b> <b>Extent /importance/ role/range</b>	<b>Very little mention or mainly implicit</b> <b>Rwanda.</b> NE is very thinly represented. –Strategies are mostly dissemination of information with the aim of changing behaviours.	<b>Quite extensively mentioned but vague (e.g. promotion, communication, IEC, dissemination)</b> <b>Uganda.</b> ICE is one of the 12 main areas of focus of the policy. It includes specific NE goal and NE strategies. It targets, school children, communities, human resources, etc.	<b>Explicit extensive nutrition education policy &amp; strategic plan in separate doc or section</b> <b>Brazil.</b> The third area (out of 8) of focus of the plan is the “Institution of permanent processes of NE, research and training in FNS and the right to food”. One of priority goals of the F&N Security Plan is to elaborate and publish a national conceptual framework for NE.
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION EDUCATION</b> <b>Integration</b>	<b>In only a few settings – e.g. schools</b> <b>Costa Rica.</b> IEC programme for <i>consumers</i> , to counteract deceiving food labelling influences (to be delivered in conjunction with the food industry). Food and Nutrition Education Centers for Infant Nutrition seem to only distribute food to poorer population groups; no signs of real NE being delivered.	<b>Slimline services in high-priority arenas (schools, IYCF, FBDLGs, HIV/AIDS)</b> <b>El Salvador.</b> Food and Nutrition Education is one of the 12 strategic guidelines in the FNS policy. NE is to be integrated in activities carried out by different sectors at different levels. In schools, family, community and work contexts.	<b>Extensive educational program Incl. in agriculture, food security &amp; community programs</b> <b>Brazil.</b> Includes the agriculture sector (training of professional and family food producers in FN aspects); social assistance sector, education (e.g. school gardens; school lunches, training of teachers in healthy eating promotion ?) and health.
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION EDUCATION</b> <b>Quality</b>	<b>Mainly information delivery</b> <b>Guatemala.</b> Strategies focused on delivery of systematic information campaigns on IEC.	<b>Some attempt at activation and follow-up</b> <b>Uganda.</b> Mostly dissemination of information, but it includes activities that could actually promote behaviour change, e.g. to mobilize communities to identify and solve their F&N problems.	<b>Full behaviour change approach + practice, maintenance and evaluation</b> <b>Nigeria.</b> To improve the capacity to address food and nutrition problems, one of the strategies proposed is to “Promote participatory approaches for communities to access, analyze and take appropriate actions to address food and nutrition problems”

# Food and Nutrition (Education ?) Training

	FROM	THROUGH	TO
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION EDUCATION TRAINING (cap devt) – extent</b>	<b>Very little or none</b> <b>Malawi.</b> Training in Nutrition, not NE. Aims at <i>building institutional and human capacities</i> for the effective delivery of nutrition services design, development and implementation of relevant nutrition programmes, projects and interventions [...].	<b>Some ad hoc training for professionals, planners and extension workers; optional modules in first degrees</b> <b>Nigeria.</b> The policy aims for integration and strengthening of NE in the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. It is not mentioned which disciplines will be targeted.	<b>Institutionalised training of range of managers, planners, educators and health professionals, including nutritionists</b>  <b>?</b>
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION EDUCATION TRAINING Integration</b>	<b>Within one sector only</b> <b>Kenya.</b> Training in Nutrition, not NE. Training teachers on nutrition and health workers on nutrition as a contributing factor to extension.	<b>More than one group or sector</b> <b>Brazil. Education:</b> training of primary school teachers in promotion of healthy diets; and within the National School feeding plan, teachers, cooks, nutritionists, school feeding programme advisers, etc, are trained in FNS and the right to food. Also, training of professionals that deal with F&N in public policies, particularly those working in social assistance. No mention of training of HR in NE at university level (although they actually do).	<b>Across the board, many groups, including NGOs</b>  <b>?</b>
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION EDUCATION TRAINING Quality</b>	<b>Mostly training in nutrition; mostly information-based</b> <b>Nigeria.</b> Targets professionals and undergraduates. A skill-gap analysis of professionals involved in F&N activities will be undertaken to identify training needs (not necessarily NE but could be implicit). The curricula of tertiary institutions is to be reviewed and strengthened with <i>F&amp;N</i> components.	<b>Training in NE but mostly good advice and information</b> <b>Uganda.</b> The ICE section has as a goal to develop skills of HR to promote proper food and nutrition practices. <i>The curriculum of training institutions' (which discipline is not mentioned?) is to be revised and strengthened in ICE components.</i> The policy aims for the establishment of a Food and Nutrition Training Center of Excellence (which is not mentioned in the Food and Nutrition Strategy of the country).	<b>Action-oriented, competency-based training with practice of some kind</b>  <b>?</b>

# Conclusions

- Nutrition education receive little attention in national policies, but **at least it is present!**
- There is no clear understanding/consensus about NE.  
In most cases giving information about nutrition = NE
- There is little activation of individuals: involving action, practice, demonstration, imitation.
- NE is not integrated in all relevant sectors (e.g. Education, Agriculture, Social Development) and rarely integrated/delivered with other initiatives (e.g. food security programmes).
- Governments take very lightly the issue of changing diets and the growing epidemic of obesity and NCD.
- Policy makers, at national, regional and local levels, need to be nutrition-educated.

# Quotes

*“On the long term, the policy promotes the production of an access to high nutritive value foods for a diversified and varied diet while nutrition assessment and counseling; and education and demonstrations are to be a basis for sustaining the behavior change.”*

*Dr. Mary Shawa, Principal Secretary,  
Department of Nutrition, HIV AND AIDS  
Malawi*

*“Increased food availability and access to food may mitigate hunger, but not necessarily malnutrition.”*

*National Food Policy, Bangladesh*



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament  
of the Federal Republic of Germany



# Quotes

*Changes in eating practices requires of coordinated nutrition education and behavior change strategies”. Special attention should be given to vulnerable groups such as children, lactating mothers, elderly, etc. Emphasis should be placed on “nutritional value of diets”.*

*Costa Rica*

*“Malnutrition has long been recognized as a consequence of poverty and lack of basic nutrition education.”*

*Nigeria*



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany



# What now?

There is a great need for Advocacy for Nutrition Education and Nutrition Education Training, but the question now is:

- What is the priority?
- Where should we start?
- How do we do it?
- How much can and are **you** willing to do?

**THE TIME OF NUTRITION EDUCATION IS NOW,  
WE SHOULD TAKE THE MESSAGE OUT THERE,  
AND SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE**

# IMMENSE THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION



Supported by:



based on a decision of the Parliament  
of the Federal Republic of Germany

