



Addressing hunger and under-nutrition in Eastern Africa through knowledge exchange with India: Focus on women and children*



**Information presented in this paper is for Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda*

The sharing of India’s experiences on state provisioning and formulating the Right to Food through **knowledge exchange can help accelerate pace for addressing food and nutrition needs of women and children in countries in Eastern Africa.**

Under the Knowledge Partnership Programme (KPP) some debates that arose during the formulation of Indian legislation, policies and programmes was shared with other Asian and African developing countries by the Centre for Equity Studies. The document [State food provisioning as social protection](#)¹ prepared under this project and subsequently published by FAO provided a reference point to **initiate discussions around food provisions for women and children.**

Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa remain particularly exposed to the lack of, or inadequate, intake of micronutrients, resulting in different types of malnutrition, such as iron-deficiency anemia and vitamin A deficiency².

Women and children are particularly vulnerable to hunger and under-nutrition and addressing their food and nutrition requirements can help break the cycle of poverty. **Social safety nets and targeted measures to women and children and the most vulnerable population groups can lead to a better nutrition and higher labour productivity.**

India as a learning partner

India incomplete journey on the state’s role and various policies and programmes offers options on how to address challenges for providing adequate and nutritious food especially to women and children. In four of five countries of East Africa reviewed, the Right to Food exists. **However the implementation framework is currently missing.**

Salient Features: India’s National Food Security Act (NFSA)

India’s National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 legally binds national and state governments to extend social protection to the country’s population. The NFSA guarantees:

- Highly subsidised and nearly free monthly rations of rice, wheat or millets to 75% of rural and 50% of urban populations (a total of 800 million people);
- Universal feeding programmes for pre-school and schoolchildren and pregnant and lactating mothers along with universal maternity entitlements.
- It mandates the creation of institutional mechanisms (among them, grievance redress systems) for the enforcement of the law at national, state and district levels.

The major entitlements addressed under the Act are given in Table 1. These rations are available to families through fair price shops to ration card holders. Ration cards are issued in the name of an adult woman in each deserving family. **Provisions under these entitlements and delivery mechanisms could suggest options for in-country exploration.**



Hunger and undernutrition in Eastern Africa

Eastern Africa remains the sub region with the biggest hunger problem in absolute terms, being home to 124 million undernourished people. While the share of undernourished has fallen by 33.2 percent, due to rapid population growth, the number of hungry people has risen by nearly 20 percent over the MDG monitoring period.³

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1 State food provisioning as social protection- Debating India’s national food security law – Mr Harsh Mander

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Table 1: Major entitlements under India's National Food Security Act

Entitlements	Provisions under National Food Security Act, 2013
For pregnant and lactating women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every pregnant and lactating woman to get a free meal during pregnancy and up to 6 months after childbirth through local anganwadis Maternity benefit of minimum of Rs 6,000 in installments Women employed with the government, public sector undertakings and state public sector undertakings not entitled to these benefits.
For children from birth up to 6 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For children below the age of 6 months, exclusive breastfeeding to be promoted For children between 6 months and 6 years of age to get appropriate meal, free of charge, through local anganwadi.
Midday meals to children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children between 6 to 14 years of age to be provided with one midday meal free of charge, in schools run by local bodies and in government and government-aided schools, every day except on school holidays Every school and anganwadi to have facilities for cooking meals, drinking water and sanitation.
Prevention and treatment of child malnutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local anganwadis to identify and provide free meals to malnourished children.
Entitlement of special groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special focus in ensuring food security to be give to needs of people of vulnerable groups living in remote and difficult areas, such as hilly and tribal areas.
Subsidised food grains to rural and urban households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority households: 5kg of food grains per person per month at a subsidized price specified in Schedule I Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households to be entitled to 35kg of food grains per household per month at prices specified in Schedule I Entitlements to be extended to 75% of rural population and 50% pf urban population Food Security allowance to be given to people if food grains or meals are not supplied Within 365 days of the commencement of the act the state shall identify eligible households.

Nutrition status of women and its implications

Estimates indicate that globally 795 million people were undernourished in 2014-16. Learning from each other can benefit millions who go to sleep hungry and with inadequate nutrition.

Malnutrition is a severe social problem that affects productivity. Women play a crucial role in defeating hunger and yet they are often victims of hunger. The health of a child is closely linked to the health and nutritional status of the mother. An under-nourished woman will give birth to a baby with low birth weight, causing the cycle of under-nutrition and poor health to continue. **A malnourished child is vulnerable to disease and infection.**

Underweight babies are 20 per cent more likely to die before the age of five. Under nutrition retards a child's growth and affects their future productivity and capabilities. **Nutrition-deficient individuals are less productive at work.** Low productivity results in low pay, trapping them in a vicious circle of under-nutrition.

In the Eastern and Southern Africa region, **approximately 14 percent of infants weigh less than 2.5 kg at birth, 26 percent of all children under the age of five are underweight, and 45 percent suffer from stunted growth,** often resulting in irreversible physical and mental deficiencies later in life. **Under-nutrition contributes to up to 50 percent of all cases of child mortality⁴.** The nutritional status of women and children in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are given in Table 2 and Figure 1 below.

Table 2: Nutritional status of woman and children

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Prevalence of Anemia for non-pregnant Women	25%	17%	40%	27%	19%
Prevalence of Anemic (Pregnant, 15-49)	36%	19%	51%	34%	23%
Prevalence of Anemia (Children 6-59 months)	46%	38%	61%	56%	50%
Prevalence of Underweight Children under five	16%	11%	17%	16%	25%
Prevalence of Stunting in Children under five	35%	44%	44%	38%	40%
Prevalence of Wasted Children under five	7%	3%	4%	6%	9%

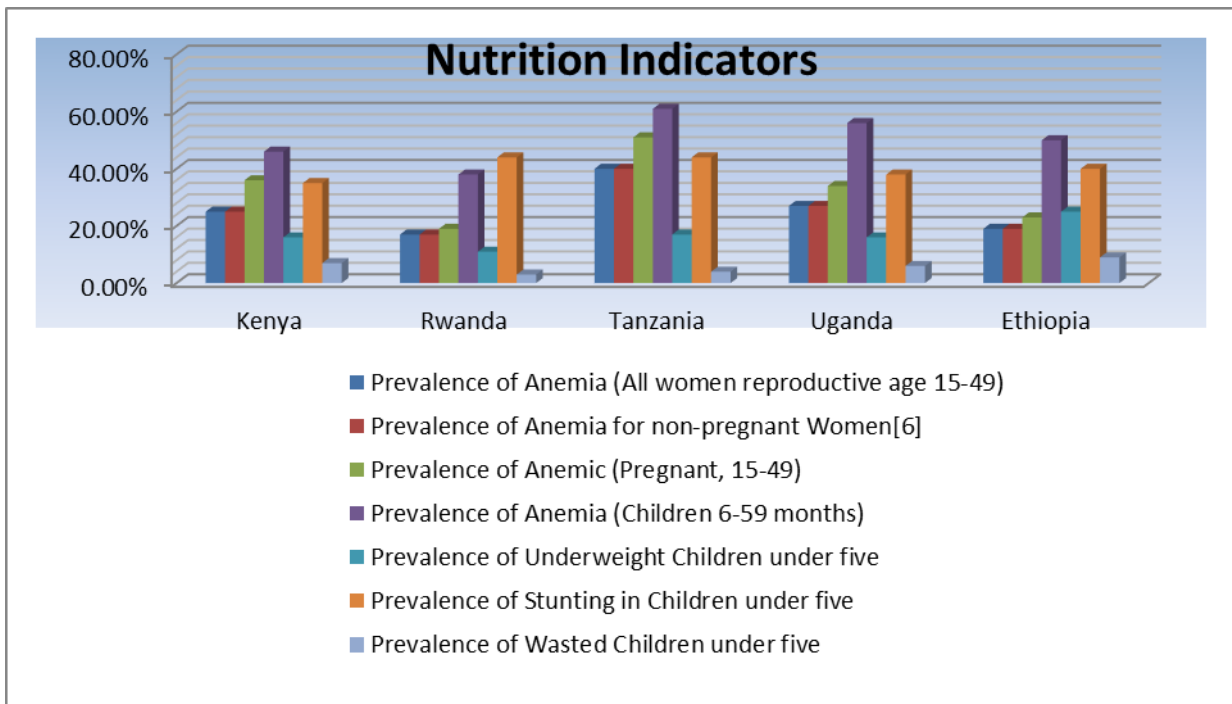
¹ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/NUTRITION/Resources/281846-1271963823772/Kenya.pdf>

² https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/USAID-Rwanda_NCP.pdf

³ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/NUTRITION/Resources/281846-1271963823772/Tanzania.pdf>

⁴ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/NUTRITION/Resources/281846-1271963823772/Uganda.pdf>

Figure 1: Nutritional status of women and children



As the table and figure indicates, the nutritional indicators for stunting, underweight and wasting of children and anemia amongst women are high, with the figures being most worrisome for Tanzania.

Legal framework

The right to food protects the right of all human beings to be free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. All countries barring Rwanda have the right to food either in their constitution or as legislation. Rwanda has ratified the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by way of accession (see Table 3 and Map 1 for the status of Right to Food in these countries).

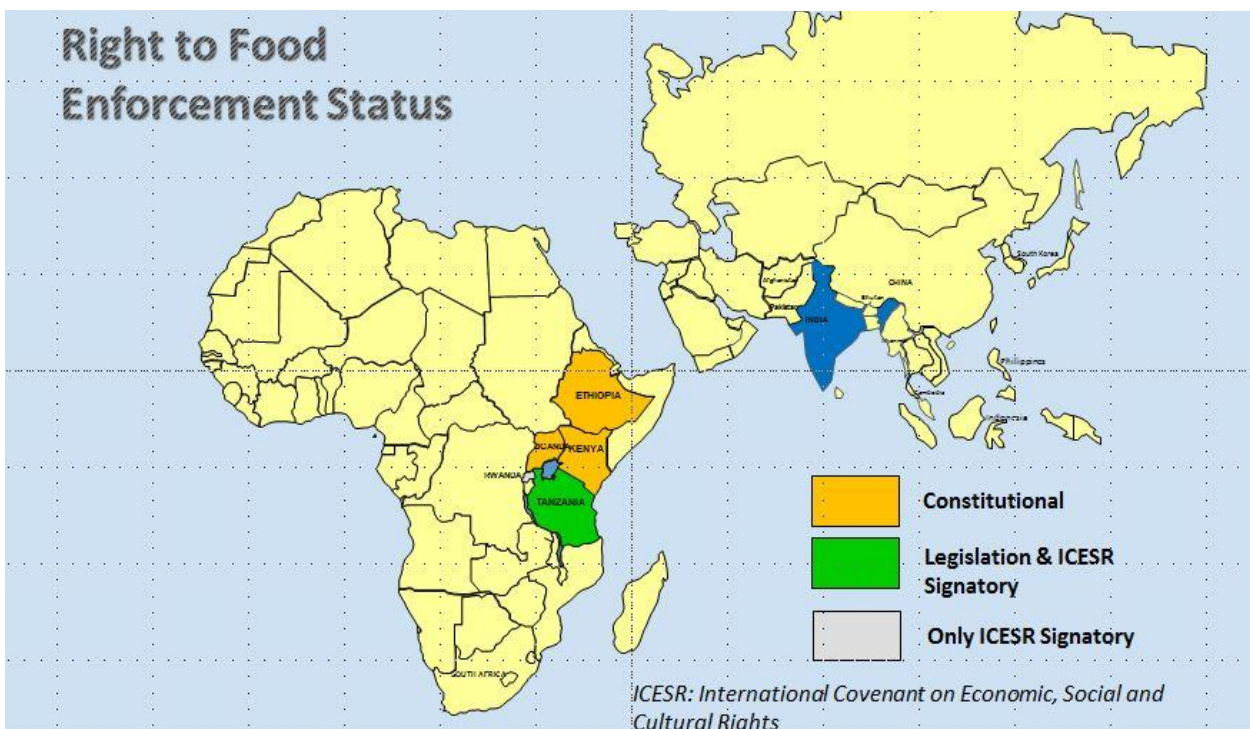


Table 3: Legal status of Right to Food in select East African countries

Ethiopia	<i>The right to food is enshrined in the constitution, Article 90 (Social objectives): "To the extent the country's resources permit, policies shall aim to provide all Ethiopians with access to public health and education, clean water, housing, food and social security."⁵</i>
Kenya	<i>Article 43 of the Constitution ; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1) Every person has the right— a) to the highest attainable standard of health, which includes the right to health care services, including reproductive health care; b) to accessible and adequate housing, and to reasonable standards of sanitation; c) to be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality; d) to clean and safe water in adequate quantities; e) to social security; and f) to education.</i>
Rwanda	<i>The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda does not explicitly guarantee the right to adequate food. The Republic of Rwanda has become a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1975 by way of accession⁶.</i>
Tanzania	<i>Zanzibar region (Tanzania) is addressing hunger and malnutrition through the Food Security & Nutrition Act, which enshrines the right to food in legislation. Tanzania has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on 11 June 1976 (accession) (UNHCHR, 2001). However, the right to food is not stated in the national constitution⁷. Tanzania has ratified a number of international agreements but looking at its supply and access indicators and the state of the economy, the government's capability to implement the right to food is questionable. Again, we see a similar pattern where overseas development aid decreases and the debt service as a percentage of export of goods and services increase, which puts to question Tanzania's capability to implement the right to food⁸.</i>
Uganda	<i>The right to food is enshrined in the constitution, Objective 14 (General social and economic objectives): "The State shall endeavour to fulfill the fundamental rights of all Ugandans to social justice and economic development and shall, in particular, ensure that... all Ugandans enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education, health services, clean and safe water, decent shelter, adequate clothing, food, security and pension and retirements benefits⁹"</i>

Efforts under the Knowledge Partnership Programme

The sharing of India's experiences of formulating the Right to Food and state provisioning through dialogues helped trigger collective action to address global hunger in Asia and Africa. These dialogues helped reach out to 15 countries (see Map). Spins offs from this work spread to South American countries and focused work in Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar. To set the tone, ten globally relevant debates that emerged during India's journey on the Right to Food were captured in an FAO-partnered publication titled State provisioning as social protection: Debating India's national food security law and launched in FAO, Rome in October 2015 along with a video.

This document formed the basis of discussions with various groups within the government system and with civil society organisations. This publication can be a useful starting point for countries working on food and nutrition security.

Dialogues around the debates were held in Dhaka for the South Asian region, in Mali for West Africa and in Kenya to bring together in-country stakeholders. These debates served as a reference point to stimulate discussions and identify areas of further learning.

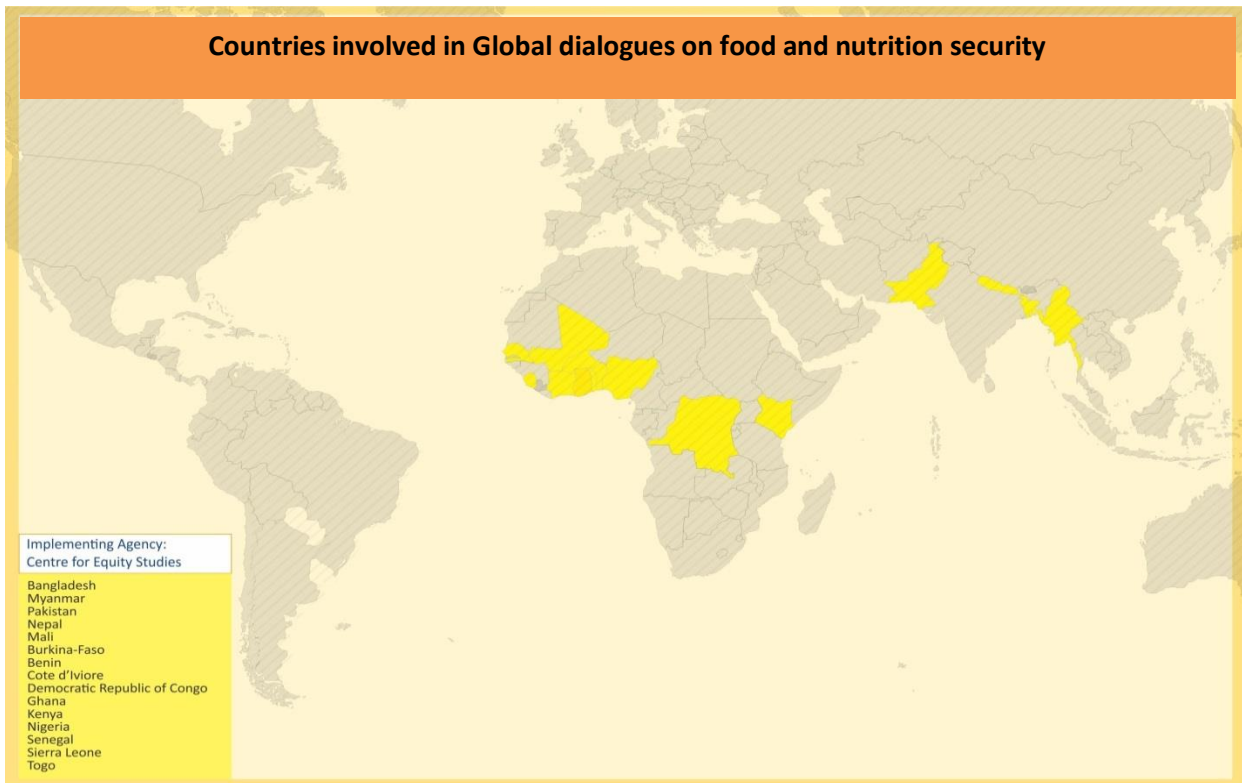
⁵ <http://www.webcitation.org/691eMRzRd>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food-around-the-globe/countries/rwa/en/>

⁷ http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Food/SRRTF%20BN%2005_SouthernEasternAfrica_en.pdf

⁸ <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC12110.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.webcitation.org/691eMRzRd>



Barring Rwanda who has ratified the ICESCR, the other countries have legislation in place for ensuring food for all. Learning from India could help these countries devise policies and programmes that reach out to the vulnerable and translate this right into reality.

KPP is a South-South cooperation programme promoting knowledge sharing in the areas of Food Security, Resource Scarcity and Climate Change; Health and Disease Control; Trade and Investment; and Women and Girls. KPP is funded by the Government of UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and managed by a consortium led by IPE Global Private Limited under its Knowledge Initiative. The main objective of KPP is 'Gathering and uptake of evidence on issues central to India's national development that have potential for replication in LICs and impact on global poverty'.

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