

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The report highlights the need to address many issues simultaneously to tackle chronic malnutrition comprehensively: policy changes and improved implementation of existing policies in the Somali region are necessary.

5.1 Recommendations for SCUK programmes

The precise mix of interventions required will depend on what is feasible, what other organizations are doing on the ground, and the specific context of different communities and livelihood zones. Broadly the recommendation is to implement programmes with the following components in the same communities, recognizing that to prevent malnutrition the programme components need to all converge at the child level. This means that geographic coverage needs to match for each component. Some issues need to be addressed at the household level, and some that will focus on children and their mothers. Livelihood interventions, for example, need to be targeted at the household whereas health services need to prioritize children and their mothers.

1. Assessment and treatment of acute malnutrition; continuation of nutrition and early warning information systems followed by response
2. Livelihood initiatives, delivered through livestock and rangeland management, but possibly including alternative income sources, e.g. cash transfers and support to micro-enterprise. Livelihood initiatives should take into consideration women's work load, so any initiative aimed at women should not reduce time for care of children.
3. Support to health services, particularly Maternal and Child Health and health extension, immunization and vitamin A supplementation.
4. Safe water and sanitation programme to improve hygiene, prevent infections and also reduce the time required by women to fetch water
5. An initiative to improve dietary diversity. This may be approached through support to markets, small scale home gardening and education linked to improved income generated through livelihoods initiatives.
6. Informal education to improve knowledge on nutrition and health. This should emphasize breast feeding information, how to prepare weaning foods and increase dietary diversity using local foods, nutrition during pregnancy and lactation, hygiene education, HIV prevention. If possible all household members including men, women and older children should be included.
7. Gender initiatives to empower women as decision makers within the communities through support to women's groups.

There are strong links between these recommendations, for example, a livelihood component would also support women if their workload was reduced, small irrigation and reduce women's time. Health services could improve both child and maternal health, enabling women to provide better care. With nutrition education, the demand for a more diverse diet could increase.

5.2 Community recommendations

Following the initial analysis of survey results, the research team revisited 5 communities to feedback results and to ask about the communities' priorities for addressing malnutrition. Group discussions were carried out with women and men separately. First they were asked to brainstorm all their ideas for projects and then to prioritize, as a group, the three most important projects. Following this, a score was given for each of the communities' top priorities and these were then ranked in total.

Women's top priorities:

1. Health facilities
2. General food distribution and supplementary food for children
3. Safe water
4. Education formal and informal

Men's top priorities:

1. Safe water
2. Health facilities
3. Education; formal and informal
4. General Food distribution and supplementary food for children

Other ideas suggest by men:

- Restocking, animal health support
- Agricultural inputs: plough oxen, water, seeds and fertilizer, training
- environmental management for gully erosion and pastures and thorny bush control
- Communications, radio or telecom and roads
- Training for TBAs

Other ideas suggested by women

- Restocking
- Agricultural inputs
- Income generation and credit schemes
- Attention for the elderly including food distribution
- Support for women's associations
- Environmental sanitation: latrines
- Road construction

The top priorities suggested by women and men were the same, albeit with different priorities. Livelihood interventions were also mentioned by both men and women and included agricultural inputs (for agro-pastoralists) and restocking and income generation, although these were not given top priority. These ideas accord well with the recommendations from the surveys; programmes developed around these themes are likely to be acceptable to the communities.

5.3 Future Programmes suggested by the findings and the communities' priorities:

We have identified some of the main underlying causes of malnutrition in the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Shinile zone. The next step is to design then implement an integrated programme that will address these causes. This future programme should be well monitored and evaluated to assess the extent to which the different components contribute to a reduction in malnutrition and the cost-effectiveness of such a programme. This information could then be used to guide the design of future nutrition programmes. Specific policy recommendations for addressing malnutrition in pastoral communities need also to be developed.