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Topic: The political economy of public health nutrition

Title: Nutrition sensitivity of the South African policy environment

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Introduction: The prioritisation of nutrition in South Africa is often a well-debated subject; however the policy landscape and processes are not well understood. This project reviewed the nutrition sensitivity and prioritisation of nutrition within the different government structures. This paper presents a summary of the findings from a South African case study on nutrient sensitivity as commissioned by the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition.

Methodology: A desktop review of current policies and programmes was done, followed by interviews with role players within the various governmental organizations and other experts. In depth interviews were conducted with national stakeholders and questionnaires were administered. Detailed specifications and analysis frameworks were elaborated with a group of experts during the UNSCN Meeting of the Minds 2 in Geneva in early 2013.

Results: The Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) stipulates that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water and that every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services (Section 28). Although nutrition has been enshrined as part of the constitution, the lack of definite prioritisation of nutrition outcomes to the various departments has resulted in lack of coordination. Only during the 2012 Manguang Resolutions it was requested that services be better integrated, including nutritional support. This has been followed by a process to develop an integrated and comprehensive food security and nutrition policy and action plan for South Africa.