

# Alive & Thrive Ethiopia

2017–2024



DESTA KEBEDE | ALIVE & THRIVE

Alive & Thrive (A&T) is a global nutrition initiative to save lives, prevent illness, and ensure healthy growth of mothers and children. From 2009–2014, A&T demonstrated that rapid improvements in infant and young child feeding (IYCF) are possible in settings as diverse as Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Viet Nam. In 2014, A&T began working in Burkina Faso, India, Nigeria, and throughout the Southeast Asia region, expanding its scope to include maternal and adolescent nutrition, and using agriculture and social protection programs as delivery mechanisms for maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN). Now, A&T is leveraging its robust network and knowledge base to strengthen systems and build capacity in these and other countries across Africa and Asia.

As A&T enters its second decade in Ethiopia, it continues to apply knowledge and learning from previous direct implementation activities, while providing a range of technical assistance to Ethiopia's government and partners. From 2017–2022, A&T's primary focus will be on systems strengthening and capacity building in the health and agriculture sectors to translate MIYCN policies into action. This brief shares examples of A&T's new and ongoing efforts to generate evidence for the national and global community working to scale MIYCN coverage.

## Policy and partnerships

Successful MIYCN interventions are dependent upon the strength of the policies and guidance that support them. To achieve optimal coverage, A&T advocates for improved guidelines and implementation plans that integrate MIYCN into various platforms at the regional and federal levels. Examples of A&T's advocacy priorities include:

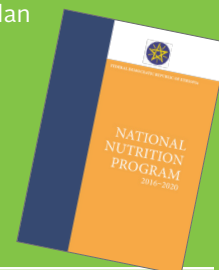
- Forming alliances and engaging influential decision-makers to support the implementation of national MIYCN policies;
- Championing for improved allocation and utilization of resources for MIYCN services;
- Elevating the importance of maternal nutrition in antenatal care (ANC) services and promoting integration into reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) services;
- Operationalizing the National Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Strategy (NNSAS) using data to identify

and promote regionally suitable nutritious and affordable foods crops, and developing audience-specific, evidence-based communication materials; and

- Engaging with journalists and non-traditional partners, such as professional associations and religious institutions, to advance advocacy efforts.

## NATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

- Health Sector Transformation Plan
- Agricultural Growth Program
- Productive Safety Net Program
- National Nutrition Program II, 2016–2020
- National Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Strategy, 2016



## PLATFORMS IMPROVING MIYCN SERVICES

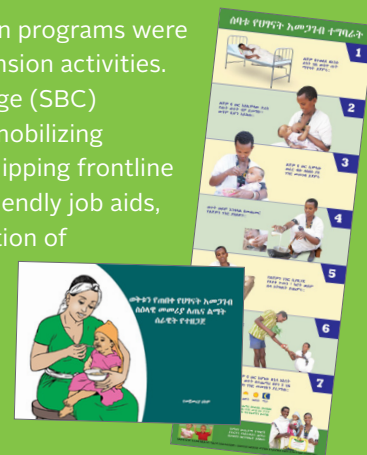
- From 2015 to 2017, in children 6–23 months of age in intervention areas:

Minimum dietary diversity increased from **5% TO 25%**

Minimum acceptable diet increased from **4% TO 18%**

Stunting decreased from **36% TO 23%**

- Agricultural extension programs were linked to health extension activities.
- Social behavior change (SBC) strategies—such as mobilizing religious leaders, equipping frontline workers with user-friendly job aids, and using a combination of interpersonal and mass communication—were widely adopted by stakeholders.



To protect and promote breastfeeding, A&T is collaborating with UNICEF and the Food, Medicine, and Health Care Administration and Control Authority (FMHACA). This partnership is working together to advocate for a strengthened version of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (the Code), which is Ethiopia's infant formula and follow-up formula directive. Ongoing advocacy for the Code continues to be a priority for A&T, due to the vital role country-specific policies play in safeguarding children from health risks associated with breast-milk substitutes (BMS).

## Health systems strengthening

**Capacity building.** To cultivate critical leadership and management skills within the health system and promote evidence-based decision-making for effective MIYCN programs, A&T is embedding senior technical advisors within the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH), in six Regional Health Bureaus, and the Federal Program Delivery Unit (FPDU). Through mentorship and day-to-day coaching, these technical advisors will support decision-makers and regional managers to use data for developing and monitoring plans; identify and address roadblocks in implementation; and set priorities for achieving quality coverage of MIYCN services. A&T is also strengthening the capacity of Nutrition Case Teams to increase accountability and commitment for MIYCN service delivery, while work to establish regional Food and Nutrition Delivery Units further supports multisectoral nutrition program implementation.

**Performance tools and data systems.** A&T has learned over the years that mainstreaming MIYCN within RMNCH services requires a well-crafted approach, tools, and follow-up support. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Last 10 Kilometers Project (L10K), and the Ethiopia Data Use Partnership (EDUP), A&T is expanding the use of simple, high-quality frameworks and tools for planning, implementation, and performance improvement. To ensure the data are effectively used, A&T is working with L10K to showcase MIYCN interventions in RMNCH centers of excellence and building on EDUP's work to facilitate data reviews in monthly and quarterly meetings. A&T is also helping stakeholders understand MIYCN indicators, and strengthening the data visualization capacity of national and regional government staff.

## Nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA)

Ethiopia's current NNSAS aims to give women and young children access to healthier foods and to promote their consumption. To make this possible, the plan emphasizes food

production strategies geared toward diversifying available foods and social behavior change (SBC) interventions to increase their use. A&T is supporting this national strategy by analyzing the food environment in different regions and sharing the results with government advisors and implementers in the agricultural sector. A&T is helping to provide the data necessary to tailor interventions for each regional context. To ensure that these findings and interventions are mainstreamed in regional plans, A&T and its partners have embedded experienced and trained advisors to build the capacity of the agriculture staff at key federal and regional posts.

Long-term sustainability and governance are important objectives of A&T's support. Leadership and in-service trainings will help agriculture teams strengthen skills for effectively using data systems for decision-making and promoting investment in NSA. These trainings and other NSA interventions will be documented to capture the approaches that contribute to improved dietary diversity.

### KEY NSA PARTNERS

- International Food Policy Research Institute
- Food and Agriculture Organization
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
- Save the Children
- European Union

## Knowledge and learning

To understand the effectiveness of Ethiopia's expanded program platforms, A&T is conducting implementation research on the following:

- Maternal nutrition delivered through ANC services;
- Adolescent nutrition delivered through a multi-sectoral approach; and
- NSA approaches to influence the food environment.

This research is expected to guide national strategies for both pastoralist and highland agriculture. To build institutional capacity in evidence-based program and policy analysis, A&T is engaging academic institutions in analyzing and interpreting data. Small grants and implementation research opportunities will be used to answer policy and program related questions.