Gender equality and environmental protection are central in Sweden’s nutrition interventions

Within Swedish international development policy, nutrition is considered a determinant of health; on its own, it is not among Sweden’s priorities. Sweden does not have its own sectoral strategy on nutrition and this area is rarely listed as a priority within country strategies.

However, Sweden’s development agency Sida addresses nutrition issues indirectly through its work in agriculture and food security, its environmental policy, and its focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment. It emphasizes the importance of working with women on nutrition issues as a path to empowerment. Nutrition is seen as one of the requirements for women’s financial independence, access to land, equal participation in labor markets, and access to technology.

Quantifying Sweden’s engagement in the area is difficult, particularly as Sweden does not participate in the reporting framework set by the ‘Scaling Up Nutrition’ (SUN) initiative to track nutrition-sensitive interventions, and does is not featured in the Global Nutrition Report. Sweden’s funding for nutrition-specific interventions is very low: according to data from the OECD, funding for basic nutrition amounted to US$6 million in 2017, or 2% of Sweden’s bilateral health ODA.

The Department for International Development and Cooperation leads on strategy around nutrition

The Department for International Development and Cooperation, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinates the strategies of Swedish ODA, including around nutrition. When it comes to the design of specific programs in Sweden’s bilateral cooperation framework, the respective regional department within Sida takes the lead.

Sweden’s nutrition ODA

Nutrition-specific:
Interventions that address underlying causes of malnutrition and that take into account cross-sector actions and impacts (i.e. improving access to diverse foods).

Nutrition-sensitive:
Interventions that address immediate causes of undernutrition and have the improvement of nutrition (i.e. support for exclusive breastfeeding, supplementary feeding, etc.) as their primary objective.