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Introductory Editorial

From evidence to action: Advancing global public health nutrition through research, policy, and sustainable food systems in a changing world

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Highlights/Key Messages

- Public health nutrition now integrates food systems, equity, and policy.
- Life-course nutrition remains central to improving population health.
- Stronger health systems are vital for effective nutrition interventions.
- Sustainable diets require innovation supported by sound public policies.
- Evidence must drive nutrition action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The second issue of World Nutrition for 2026 reflects the ongoing evolution of public health nutrition from a discipline primarily concerned with nutrient deficiencies towards one increasingly engaged with the broader determinants of health, including food systems, equity, sustainable development and the impact of ultra-processed foods and the industry behind them. The 26 papers (one Editorial, 21 Original Research Articles, two Review Articles, one Commentary, and one Policy/Perspective article) presented in this issue collectively demonstrate this. Improving nutritional health requires more than individual behaviour change—it demands supportive environments, resilient health systems, evidence-informed policies, and sustained political commitment, including the rare willingness to stand up to huge food companies.

We open this issue with the editorial by **Greiner and Jain**, *"SHAKE the salt habit, 2026"*, which revisits one of the world's most persistent dietary risk factors: excessive salt consumption. Building on WHO's updated SHAKE framework, the authors argue that voluntary approaches alone have proved insufficient. Instead, they advocate stronger government leadership through mandatory food reformulation, front-of-pack labelling, fiscal measures, procurement standards, and protection of public health policies from commercial interference.

A prominent feature of the research presented in this issue is its focus on nutrition across the life course, including mothers, infants, children, and adolescents. **Eyinla et al.,** in *"Nutrient intakes of 1–3-year-old children attending crèches in Ibadan, Nigeria"*, demonstrate that although energy and macronutrient intake may be adequate, substantial micronutrient deficiencies may persist among Nigerian toddlers. Their findings underscore the need to strengthen caregiver education, childcare nutrition policies, and supportive feeding environments. **Kimoto et al.,** in *"Meal provisioning and food handling practices at Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres"*, a cross-sectional study in Johannesburg, South Africa, demonstrate the importance of early childhood environments, including challenges related to meal quality, food safety practices, training, and institutional support.

Maternal and infant nutrition remain critical priorities. **Mannapperuma and Ganesan,** in *"Undernutrition and its contributing factors among children aged 6–24 months attending a tertiary care hospital: A cross-sectional descriptive study,"* provide evidence of the continued influence of complementary feeding practices, household income, and maternal education on child nutritional outcomes.

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Okorie et al., in *"Maternal capabilities, knowledge and attitudes toward infant nutrition among pregnant women in Isuikwuato Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria"*, remind us that maternal autonomy, knowledge, and social support remain central determinants of optimal infant nutrition. **Pham et al.,** in *"Body composition and obesity among hospital nurses in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: A cross-sectional study"*, examine the importance of assessing obesity among healthcare workers, highlighting the limitations of conventional BMI and the importance of body composition analysis.

Nutrition during adolescence also receives substantial attention. **Tanimonure et al.,** in *"Dietary practices, nutritional knowledge and anthropometric indices of adolescents attending public secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria"*, report alarmingly high levels of undernutrition alongside poor nutritional knowledge. Their findings reveal persistent concerns regarding poor nutritional knowledge, meal skipping, thinness, and stunting, reinforcing the importance of school-based nutrition interventions. **Itiat et al.,** in *"Anthropometric characteristics and prevalence of metabolic syndrome among in-school adolescents in Gusau urban area, Zamfara State"*, examine the growing burden of metabolic disorders among younger populations, revealing the coexistence of chronic undernutrition and emerging cardiometabolic risks. Their findings provide important baseline evidence on adolescent metabolic health and highlight the importance of early identification, nutrition education, and lifestyle interventions to prevent future non-communicable diseases. **Adepoju et al.,** in *"Nutritional status and functional capacity of physically challenged adolescents attending school of students with special needs in Ilaro, Nigeria"*, explore the nutritional vulnerabilities of adolescents living with disabilities, illustrating the intersection between disability, nutritional deficiencies, and functional independence, highlighting the need for inclusive nutrition programmes. **Zaveri's** *"Comparing front-of-pack labelling systems to improve teenagers' food choices"* provides timely experimental evidence supporting the use of warning labels as an effective strategy for improving adolescents' food choices.

Two papers reinforce the need for integrated approaches that combine nutrition education, mental well-being support, and behavioural interventions among young populations. **Shaheen et al.,** in *"Impact of stress on eating behaviours in young adults"*, explore the complex relationship between psychosocial factors and dietary behaviour among young adults, illustrating how psychological stress can be associated with dietary choices among university students. **Sikiru et al.,** in *"Dietary diversity, lifestyle, and hydration practices among athletes in Lagos State, Nigeria: A cross-sectional study"*, extend our understanding of nutrition among physically active populations. Their findings demonstrate that stress may influence food choices, contributing to increased consumption of unhealthy dietary patterns and reduced intake of protective foods such as fruits and vegetables.

Food innovation and healthier food products remain important areas of research. **Yahaya et al.,** *"Development, nutritional composition, consumer acceptability, and glycaemic response of biscuits produced from plantain and tigernut flour blends"*, demonstrate how locally available, indigenous plant-based ingredients can produce nutritionally advantageous, acceptable foods with lower glycaemic responses. Likewise, **Poojara et al.,** in *"The development of a nutritionally enhanced composite flour: nutritional, functional, and sensory properties,"* explore the development of nutrient-enhanced foods, providing evidence that locally sourced composite foods may contribute to more sustainable and nutritious dietary options while supporting agricultural diversification. **Okoduwa and Padala,** in *"Functional foods and nutraceuticals in type 2 diabetes: A public health nutrition perspective on equity, food systems, and sustainable diets"*, provide an important synthesis of evidence on functional foods, nutraceuticals, and the need to balance innovation with equity, regulation, and sustainable dietary strategies. They argue that, while functional foods hold promise, equitable food systems and culturally appropriate dietary patterns should remain the foundation of diabetes prevention and management.

Clinical nutrition, nutrition and disease, and nutrition care services receive considerable attention throughout this issue. **Nyange et al.,** *"Nutritional status of patients undergoing haemodialysis at Muhimbili National Hospital, Tanzania"*, highlight the high burden of protein-energy wasting among individuals undergoing haemodialysis and the importance of routine nutritional assessment within kidney care services. **Njau et al.,** *"Prevalence and predictors of malnutrition in patients with chronic kidney disease at Benjamin Mkapa Hospital, Dodoma, Tanzania"*, document the substantial burden of malnutrition among patients living with chronic kidney disease, reinforcing the importance of integrating nutrition care into chronic disease management. **Adekolujo et al.,** *"Assessment of nutritional status and dietary pattern of people living with HIV/AIDS attending antiretroviral therapy clinic at Adeoyo State Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria"*, demonstrate the changing nutritional profile of people living with HIV, where overweight and obesity increasingly accompany persistent undernutrition. **Tachoum et al.'s** *"Factors influencing nutritional management of hypertensive patients: A cross-sectional study at Yaoundé Central Hospital, Cameroon"* examines the relationship between dietary management and hypertension care, reminding us that socioeconomic inequalities continue to shape nutritional outcomes throughout the life course and emphasising the need for patient-centred strategies to improve dietary adherence. **Akintunde et al.'s** commentary, *"'Food as medicine': Maximising nutrition in antimicrobial resistance mitigation"*, explores the emerging relationship between nutrition, immune function, and antimicrobial resistance, while the concluding Policy and Perspective contribution by **Morrison**, *"HIV Undetectable = HIV Untransmittable (U=U) for breastfeeding"*, challenges long-standing assumptions regarding breastfeeding among mothers living with HIV and presents evidence that may influence future international infant feeding guidance.

Health systems and service delivery also emerge as recurring themes. **Ebie et al.,** in *"Assessment of barriers and facilitators of dietetics services delivery in selected health facilities in the southern part of Nigeria"*, identified institutional and operational barriers to effective dietetic service delivery. Their findings emphasise the need for improved infrastructure, professional development opportunities, interdisciplinary collaboration, and stronger recognition of nutrition professionals within healthcare systems. **Makinde et al.,** in *"Capacity of primary health care facilities to deliver nutrition services in selected urban areas of Ibadan, Nigeria"*, identified significant institutional gaps in workforce capacity, infrastructure, equipment, and quality improvement systems. Together, these studies highlight that achieving better nutritional outcomes depends not only on effective interventions but also on strengthening the nutrition components of the health systems responsible for delivering them.

Two papers examine the nexus between schooling and nutrition. **Kamda et al.'s** *"Factors associated with malnutrition among private versus public nursery school children in Kumba, Cameroon"* explores childhood malnutrition across different educational settings, demonstrating the potential influence of socioeconomic conditions and school environments on nutritional outcomes. **Ogunniyi et al.,** in *"A narrative review of trends and challenges in the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Nigeria"*, critically examine one of Africa's largest school feeding initiatives, highlighting both its achievements and ongoing governance challenges.

Perhaps one of the most compelling intervention studies in this issue is presented by **Adesanmi et al.** in *"Nutrition education alone is insufficient to achieve clinically meaningful recovery from moderate acute malnutrition in under-five children: A randomised four-arm community trial in Nigeria"*. Their findings provide robust evidence that nutrition education, while essential, cannot replace adequate food supplementation in treating moderate acute malnutrition. The study has direct implications for nutrition programming and primary healthcare policy in low-resource settings.

Collectively, the papers in this issue reaffirm that nutrition remains central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They demonstrate that improving nutritional health requires integrated action across healthcare, agriculture, education, social protection, regulation, and community engagement. They also illustrate the growing maturity of nutrition science in low- and middle-income countries, where locally generated evidence increasingly informs national and global policy.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, we express our sincere appreciation to all authors, reviewers, and editors whose commitment to scientific excellence has made this issue, by far our largest to date, possible. We hope the evidence presented here stimulates further research, informs policy, strengthens practice, and ultimately contributes to healthier populations worldwide.

As public health nutrition continues to evolve, World Nutrition remains committed to publishing rigorous, policy-relevant, and globally inclusive scholarship that advances nutrition science to improve health for all.

Author Contributions

TG conceptualised the editorial. SIRO prepared the original draft. Both TG and SIRO contributed to the review and editing of the manuscript. TG provided supervision. Both authors approved the final version for publication.

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