A National Document for Child Nutrition in Iran: A Vital Need

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Children constitute a significant percentage of the world population, and their health and its promotion are important health priorities of all societies [1]. Malnutrition in early years of life can cause delayed body growth, stunting and decreased mental development in children, and causes repeated treatment-resistant infections in them [2]. Under- and over-nutrition are both linked to various adverse health conditions. Insufficient supply of nutrients during fetal growth and in the first 2 years of life may significantly increase the risk for obesity and non-communicable diseases [3]. During the recent years, global efforts to tackle the issue of child malnutrition have resulted in new policies, initiatives as well as a real sense of urgency [4]. In 2012, the World Health Assembly in a resolution endorsed the comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant, and young child nutrition [5] which includes 6 global targets by 2025. These 6 targets include 40% reduction of the global number of stunted children under 5 years, 50% reduction of anemia in women of reproductive age, 30% reduction of low birth weight, no increase in childhood overweight, the increase in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months up to at least 50%, and finally the reduction and maintaining of childhood wasting to less than 5% [6]. The World Health Organization in the report on glob-

al nutrition targets for 2025 stated that all countries need to examine inequalities among populations and identify priority actions for particular vulnerable or marginalized groups, where there are clusters of large numbers of wasting children. Such an equity-oriented approach is both morally necessary and a prudent investment strategy [7]. Special attention to international targets, plans and resolutions to increase equity in access, and economic equity may reduce gaps between the provinces in the country in regard with the prevalence of malnutrition. The National document for Nutrition and Food Security can be considered as the most comprehensive existing document among current documents in Iran. In this document, the roadmap for the Vision 2025 was drawn up emphasizing prevention and control of nutritional risk factors for non-communicable diseases such as reduction of sugar, salt and fat consumption, increase of the consumption of fruits and vegetables, and promotion of nutritional literacy and culture among people. The review of content of the nutrition policy documents in Iran showed that there is no comprehensive and valid document specific for children, and nutrition policies are limited to those for all age groups in the National document for Nutrition and Food Security. Given the importance of ages under 5 years in children and the importance of

nutrition in these ages, a particular document is needed. Actions implemented to acceptable reduction of the prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years of age should be based on significant causing factors and evidence-based interventions. Selective interventions should focus on real needs of children, mothers, and the society. In remote and deprived areas, supportive tools to improve health and economic status are needed, and supporting pregnant women and their children is of great importance. Furthermore, cultural and economic potentials and capabilities in each region should be taken into account in order to select and implement policies. The ultimate document should be developed based on these points and also international evidence and experiences, policies analysis and previous documents in the field of food and nutrition, experts' opinions, and intersectoral stakeholders.

Ethical Issues

Not applicable.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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