





Introductory Editorial

Navigating complexity in public health nutrition: From evidence to action in a changing global landscape

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Highlights/Key Messages

- Triple burden of malnutrition demands integrated, life-course action
- Food safety risks highlight the need for stronger environmental controls
- Dietary diversity gaps persist across programmes and populations
- Adolescents face major nutrient deficiencies and health risks
- Local crops and social systems offer scalable, sustainable nutrition solutions

The first issue of *World Nutrition* for 2026 marks a significant milestone in the ongoing development of public health nutrition. As the global community faces increasingly complex and interconnected nutritional challenges, this issue brings together a diverse range of scholarship that reflects both the breadth of current evidence and the urgency for integrated, systems-based solutions. Across continents and contexts, the contributions in this volume emphasise a central theme: that malnutrition in all its forms is not an isolated issue but a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by biological, social, environmental, and structural factors.

Leading this discussion, [Greiner's](#) "*Maternal nutrition at a crossroads in India*" offers a compelling editorial perspective on the global nutrition transition through the lens of maternal health. The coexistence of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and increasing overweight among women of reproductive age exemplifies a broader epidemiological shift. The call for a "triple-duty" and life-course approach strongly aligns with the wider literature on this topic, emphasising that interventions must extend beyond pregnancy to include preconception and broader socio-environmental factors. [Imongben et al.](#) critically examine environmental factors affecting nutrition and food safety in their study, "*Determination of some heavy metals and their potential risk in selected vegetables on sale within Kaduna Metropolis, Kaduna State, Nigeria.*" Their findings highlight the challenge of achieving both nutritional adequacy and food safety, revealing significant non-carcinogenic and carcinogenic risks linked to contaminated, commonly consumed vegetables. This emphasises the importance of integrating environmental health governance into nutrition policy frameworks.

Food systems transformation and agricultural diversification are essential strategies for addressing food insecurity. In "*Prospects for fighting food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa using underutilised crops: the case for fluted pumpkin*", [Ikwuazom and Ejike](#) advocate for reintroducing indigenous crops into mainstream food systems. Their analysis highlights underutilised species as not only nutritionally valuable options but also as climate-resilient assets vital for sustainable food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

Institutional and community-level determinants of nutrition are examined further in several empirical studies. [Smit et al.](#), in "*Food-handling practices, nutrition and food safety knowledge, and attitudes of staff at early childhood development centres in the City of Cape Town, South Africa,*" highlight significant gaps between policy and practice in early childhood settings, emphasising the importance of ongoing capacity building and monitoring.

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Likewise, [Bhatnagar et al.](#), in “Food group diversity within the Supplementary Nutrition Programme of the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme of India,” show that although dietary diversity can be achieved within large-scale programmes, adapting to local contexts remains crucial to address regional disparities.

The persistent challenge of dietary inadequacy among vulnerable populations is a recurring theme. In Nigeria, [Quadri et al.](#) (*Assessment of dietary diversity score and nutritional status of under-5 children in selected rural areas of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria*) and [Sodiya et al.](#) (*Nutrient intake adequacy and its sociodemographic determinants among female adolescents in urban and rural secondary schools in Ogun, Nigeria*) provide complementary insights into the structural and socioeconomic drivers of poor dietary diversity and micronutrient deficiencies in one area of Nigeria. These findings are echoed in the work of [Poojara et al.](#), in “Nutritional status and psychological distress of adolescent girls in Ernakulam, Kerala,” which further integrates the often-overlooked dimension of mental health within the adolescent nutrition discourse.

Expanding beyond individual-level interventions, research in this issue also highlights the importance of family and community systems. In *A grandmother-inclusive approach to maternal nutrition is associated with improved maternal diet, health-seeking practices, and birthweights in rural Sierra Leone*, [Webb Girard et al.](#) present compelling evidence for leveraging intergenerational knowledge systems to improve maternal and child health outcomes. This aligns with a broader shift towards culturally embedded and socially responsive intervention models.

In a literature review, the role of food-based strategies in combating micronutrient deficiencies is explored in depth by [Amagloh et al.](#) in “Leveraging orange-fleshed sweetpotato to advance childhood nutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa”. Their synthesis of evidence supports integrating biofortified crops into complementary feeding programmes as a sustainable and scalable approach to addressing vitamin A deficiency. In another literature review in the field of specialised nutrition challenges, [Mannapperuma and Kottage](#), in “Exploring the spectrum of feeding challenges in children with autism spectrum disorder: A narrative review of aetiology, impact, and intervention strategies”, offer a nuanced understanding of feeding difficulties as complex neurodevelopmental phenomena. Their focus on family-centred and neurodiversity-affirming approaches signifies an important shift in clinical nutrition practice.

The commentary by [Jaime and Braga](#) (*Cooking, gender, and ultra-processed foods: Toward a public valorisation of culinary knowledge*) situates dietary patterns within the wider

socio-cultural and economic context, drawing attention to the intersections of gender, labour, and the global rise of ultra-processed foods. This perspective argues for valorizing culinary knowledge but at the same time that cooking should be understood as a collective responsibility and common good, requiring policies that support both adequate nutrition and gender equity.

Finally, this issue includes a reflective contribution by [Okoduwa](#) in “From advocacy to scholarly professionalisation: A reflective case study of the evolution and strategic repositioning of World Nutrition (2010–2025).” This perspective offers an introspective analysis of the journal’s journey, demonstrating how mission-driven journals can adapt to meet the strict demands of scholarly communication while maintaining their core values.

Together, the contributions in this issue confirm that addressing current nutrition challenges requires a combination of evidence, policy innovation, and contextual understanding. As *World Nutrition* continues into 2026, this issue reaffirms its commitment to promoting scholarship that is not only methodologically robust but also socially meaningful and policy-oriented. The range of perspectives included here reflects the journal’s expanding role as a platform for interdisciplinary discussion and transformative ideas in public health nutrition. On behalf of the editorial team, we thank the authors, reviewers, and readers for their ongoing engagement, which supports the journal’s mission.

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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