



**JobNut**

# Public Health Nutrition Intervention Management



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**Hughes R, Black C, Kennedy NP. *Public Health Nutrition Intervention Management: Mandates for Action*. JobNut Project, Trinity College Dublin. 2008.**

## ADDITIONAL COPIES

The complete suite of 18 Public Health Nutrition Workforce Development units developed by the JobNut Project and the related Educator's Guide are available for downloading at the following website:

<http://www.medicine.tcd.ie/nutrition-dietetics/jobnut/>

## DISCLAIMER

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Intelligence >

Mandates for Action

Action

Evaluation



# Intelligence

## Unit 6 - Mandates for Action

### Learning Objectives



On completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify and describe existing local, national, pan-European and global policy mandates that support public health nutrition intervention management
2. Describe the importance of understanding the broader policy context when developing public health nutrition interventions
3. Apply an understanding of policy mandates supporting public health nutrition action in the development of interventions plans and funding proposals

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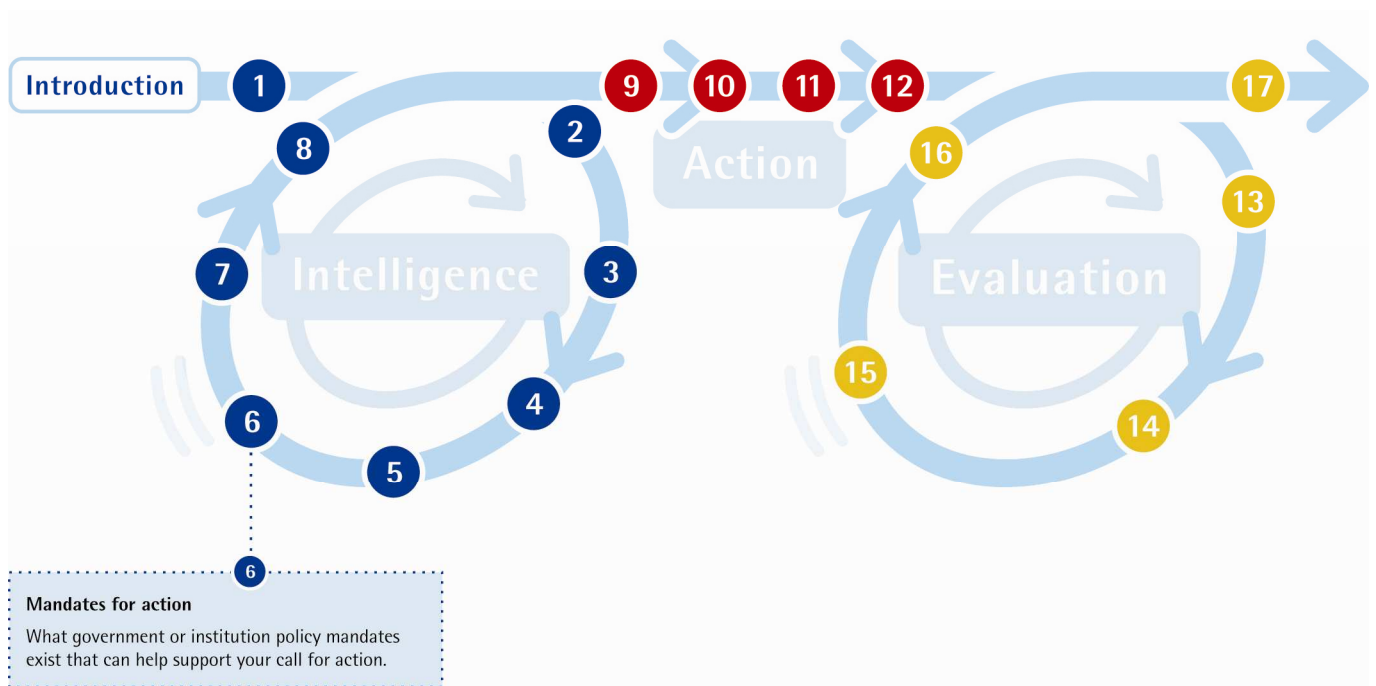
#### Unit Readings

- Food Standards Agency. *Food Labels: traffic light labelling*. 2008. <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels/trafficlighs/>
- Which ? *Which? campaigns:Traffic light labelling*. 2008. [http://www.which.co.uk/reports\\_and\\_campaigns/food\\_and\\_drink/campaigns/nutrition/food\\_labelling/traffic\\_light\\_food\\_labels\\_559\\_116406.jsp](http://www.which.co.uk/reports_and_campaigns/food_and_drink/campaigns/nutrition/food_labelling/traffic_light_food_labels_559_116406.jsp)
- National Heart Forum. *Nutrition: Traffic-light food labelling*. 2008. [http://www.heartforum.org.uk/Policy\\_nutrition.aspx?id=4](http://www.heartforum.org.uk/Policy_nutrition.aspx?id=4)
- World Health Organisation. *WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012*. 2008. World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.
- Lachat. C., Van Camp, J., De Henauw, S., Matthys, C., Larondelle, Y., Remaut-De Winter, MA. and Kolsteren, P. A concise overview of national nutrition action plans in the European Union Member States. *Public Health Nutrition* 2004. 8(3): 266-274.
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## Contents:

	Page No.
Mandates for Action - Policy Context	5
Policy Development - An Overview	6
• The Challenge of Competing Policy Agendas	8
• National Food and Nutrition Policies	8
Mandates for Action in PHN Intervention Management	10
Mandates for Action - Various Examples	12
Summary of key points	13
Additional Resources and Readings	14
References	14



From: Hughes R, Margetts B. *Public Health Nutrition: A Practitioners Handbook*. Blackwell Publishing, 2009.

Intelligence > Mandates for Action      Action      Evaluation



## Mandates for Action

### Preamble

As much of the action required in public health nutrition (PHN) practice is within the responsibility or jurisdiction of government (public health being a common core function of government in many if not most societies), policy level commitments are important. Practitioners may consider that policy is beyond an individual professional's practice, however policy exerts a powerful influence on practice because it affects service delivery models, resource allocation and supports or resists actions required to promote public health. It is important therefore to gain an understanding of how policies influence the priorities in society that affect the work of PHN. Governments across Europe and the world, with the ever expanding global obesity epidemic, are realising their responsibility in addressing population nutrition issues through developing national nutrition policies and action plans. National nutrition policies set the priorities, strategic direction and provide the framework for PHN action in local communities.

In PHN intervention management, it is necessary to acknowledge national and organisational mandates in intervention plans and funding submissions. Highlighting how the specific intervention will contribute to priorities action areas and work plans demonstrates an understanding of the policy context and highlights the interventions role in supporting the broader public health objectives. Most importantly in this context, alignment of interventions with policy mandates such as Action Plans makes it easier for government bureaucracies that manage resource distribution for public health action to support your submissions.

### Mandates for Action- the Policy Context

The term policy is used in different ways to describe the direction of an organisation or government, a decision to act on a particular problem or a set of guiding principles. The policy context can therefore operate at different levels portraying general values and culture, often used to inform specific targets and action, and/or specific verve on a specified topic (1). The vast majority of mandates for action which are necessary to review in PHN intervention management are generally considered as policies and include:

- Local and national health policies and guidelines
- Pan-European and global policies and guidelines
- Legislation and regulation
- Organisational mission statements and strategic plans
- Professional standards and ethical guidelines



Public health policy has traditionally related to disease surveillance and control, such as water supply, sewage disposal or immunisation. In accordance with contemporary conceptualisations of the environment broadening to include social, cultural and economic aspects (the socio-ecological approach to health), and simple determinant sequences of diseases being replaced with complex causal webs of factors affecting health status the policy response required is similarly complex (2). A vast array of policy areas are considered to impact on population nutrition-related health problems including, education, food, urban planning, transport, advertising and marketing. Practitioners may consider that policy is beyond an individual professional's practice, however policy exerts a powerful influence on practice because it affects service delivery models, resource allocation and supports or resists actions required to promote public health. It is important therefore to gain an understanding of how policies influence the priorities in society that affect the work of PHN (3).

It is important to note that while the policy context is largely considered a top-down process, practitioners are increasingly being invited to contribute to policy development through public consultation either as individuals, through their organisations, and/or professional associations. The outcome of well evaluated PHN interventions can contribute to evidence-base about effective public health interventions utilised in policy development.

## Policy Development - An Overview

Policy development is a process by which governments or organisations translate their vision into programmes or actions to deliver desired changes. Generally, national governments set the fundamental policy direction, while locally policies tend to develop incrementally - a series of small steps which do not fundamentally change the status quo. Policy development follows a basic pathway (similar to program planning and intervention management) including;

- i. Problem identification and issue recognition
- ii. Policy formulation
- iii. Policy implementation
- iv. Policy evaluation (4).

This pathway suggests that policy development is a rational process, yet in practice policy making uses a mixture of scientific and pragmatic intelligence. Policy development is also very contextual, subject to the social, cultural, economic and political climate at the time of development (1).

There is a number of key players involved in policy development including; policy holders (usually politicians or executive management), policy influences (lobby groups representing vested interests), the public and the media (3). The level of involvement and role of each player varies with each issue and is largely dependent upon the social climate, the perceived influence of each player, whether players stand to gain or lose from the policy, and the ability of players to have their opinions heard.

Policy development is generally considered the arena of government, typically national or pan-European, and usually follows a sequence of signalling a new policy by circulation of a Green paper (for public consultation), followed by publication of a White paper (governments legislative plan). The policy may proceed through the parliamentary or legislative process to become an Act of parliament, or may be endorsed by the appropriate Minister of Secretary as a statement of intent by government.

Intelligence >

Mandates for Action

Action

Evaluation



## Practice Note



Over recent years it has become more common for independent organisations or professional associations to develop policies that publicise their position on particular issues (commonly in the form of a media release) and increase their opportunity to be at the table to create improved public health and positive change in government policy. In a recent example several independent organisations including Which? and the National Heart Forum, were in strong support of an accurate and simplified food labelling scheme. Both organisations have publicised their strong support for the traffic-light labelling scheme developed by the Food Standards Agency, and have developed tools to assist consumers use the labels and continue to question government (with various forms of intelligence) about the impact of the scheme in its voluntary form. These health and consumer organisations are considered influence players, along with food manufactures and retailers in this debate.

## Intelligence



### Readings

Food Standards Agency. *Food Labels: traffic light labelling*. 2008.  
<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels/trafficlighs/>

Which ? *Which? campaigns:Traffic light labelling*. 2008.  
[http://www.which.co.uk/reports\\_and\\_campaigns/food\\_and\\_drink/campaigns/nutrition/food\\_labelling/traffic\\_light\\_food\\_labels\\_559\\_116406.jsp](http://www.which.co.uk/reports_and_campaigns/food_and_drink/campaigns/nutrition/food_labelling/traffic_light_food_labels_559_116406.jsp)

National Heart Forum. *Nutrition: Traffic-light food labelling*. 2008.  
[http://www.heartforum.org.uk/Policy\\_nutrition.aspx?id=4](http://www.heartforum.org.uk/Policy_nutrition.aspx?id=4)

## Exercise 1.



After exploring the websites listed above about front of pack labelling in the UK, outline the reasons why it is important for public health nutritionists to keep abreast of policies such as the food label - traffic light labelling policy. Does this policy impact on the scenario you have been given? Explain why/ why not.

### *Workshop/tutorial option:*

Complete the exercise in small groups followed by a whole-class debriefing

### *CPD option:*

Does the food label - traffic light labelling policy impact on your current job role? Explain why/ why not



## The Challenge of Competing Policy Agendas

For a policy to be developed and adopted, a number of pre-conditions usually need to be met, including:

- a groundswell of public opinion (social climate),
- clear definition of the problem,
- concerns voiced by organisations,
- a lack of competing interests or priorities,
- a policy proposal or justified case for the policy,
- support from key political figures who will benefit politically from the policy

Food and nutrition policies often work to ensure availability and accessibility of healthy foods. Food safety policies ensure protection of health from food contamination. Gaining support for policies that ensure a safe food supply have been popularly and politically supported with the development of national, and international policies such as the Codex Alimentarius (3). However, gaining consensus for policies that encourage the availability and promotion of a healthy food supply is more complex, mostly due to competing and vested interests contributing to the debate. The power and dominance of food manufacturers and retailers compared to that of primary producers and health/consumer organisations, in a climate of globalisation and deregulation, makes politicians less likely to introduce regulation or legislation regarding nutrition-related health.

Governments across Europe and the world, with the ever expanding global obesity epidemic, are realising their responsibility in addressing population nutrition issues and developing national nutrition policies and action plans. These documents largely aim to protect and promote nutrition-related health and reduce the burden of food-related disease. They therefore represent key policy mandates for public health nutrition action.

## National Food and Nutrition Policies

Since the 1992 World Declaration on Nutrition (5) and the resulting Plan of Action on Nutrition and the First Action Plan for Food and Nutrition 2000-2005 (6), there has been considerable effort across Europe to develop national policy documents and national plans to address issues directly relevant to PHN. In 2004, a culmination of international political commitment to PHN was observed with the writing of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The objective of the strategy is to provide a basis for concerted action to prevent non-communicable disease (7). The Global strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health has seen an acceleration of the development and implementation of national policies, plans and programmes to promote lifestyles that include a healthy diet and physical activity.

A review of nutrition policies in the WHO European Region in 2006 observed a noticeable improvement in the number of national policy documents focusing on or containing food and nutrition policies, and increase from 24 in 1994 to 45 in 2002 (8). The study showed that 37 countries have final policies, 8 countries have draft documents and 3 countries had no nutrition policy documents. Nutrition action areas include infant feeding, food security, food safety, nutrition, physical activity and reducing obesity. Implementation of the policies largely involved establishing advisory groups, food-based dietary guidelines, public nutrition education and monitoring and surveillance systems. Only half of the countries are working inter-sectorally involving different ministries, the private sector and non-government organisations. The report noted that while many Member States have developed policies



related to food and nutrition, implementation still appears to be a major challenge. Specific implementation challenges include lack of funds, political commitment, coordination or expertise.

The global effort to highlight the importance of developing and implementing food and nutrition policies that protect and promote health has continued with release of the second WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012. The Action Plan was adopted in 2007 by Member States of WHO/Europe as part of the implementation of the European Charter on Counteracting Obesity. This second action plan aims to support countries in implementing national plans and address the main public health challenges in the area of nutrition, food safety and food security (9). The plan highlights 6 recommended areas for integrated and multi-sectoral action:

- Supporting a healthy start: care for mothers and children
- Ensuring safe, healthy and sustainable food supply: good food, and in adequate quantities for all
- Providing comprehensive information and education to consumers: know what you eat
- Performing integrated actions to address related determinants: don't forget other risk factors
- Strengthening nutrition and food safety in the health sector: engage the health professionals, improve the services
- Monitoring, evaluation and research: act on evidence, acquire new knowledge.

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### Reading

World Health Organisation. *WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012*. 2008. World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.

Lachat. C., Van Camp, J., De Henauw, S., Matthys, C., Larondelle, Y., Remaut-De Winter, MA. and Kolsteren, P. A concise overview of national nutrition action plans in the European Union Member States. *Public Health Nutrition* 2004. 8(3): 266-274.

### NOTE:

Member state documents are available at <http://www.who.int/infobase/dpas/dpas.aspx>



## Exercise 2.

After reading the WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012 and Lachat's article. Review the national nutrition policy document for your country (or neighbouring country) and another country. Critically compare these 2 documents against the recommendations by WHO. Reflect on the methodology used by Lachat et al.

### Workshop/tutorial option:

Complete the exercise in small groups followed by a whole-class debriefing



Intelligence >

Mandates for Action

Action

Evaluation



## Mandates for Action in PHN Intervention Management

The impact and relevance of nutrition policies and action plans in the context of PHN practice is significant. National nutrition policies and action plans articulate a commitment by government and other signatories or partners to the public health of citizens and provide a national government level mandate for action on population nutrition issues. Referring to and aligning action to these policies and action plans can be very important in terms of influencing regional and local resource allocation to issues such as workforce development, intervention funding and development.

National nutrition policies and action plans codify national government priorities for action. By highlighting the nutrition areas for action and target groups the PHN workforce effort can be focused and more effective at achieving the desired health outcomes. Implementation of the strategic priorities outlined in national nutrition policies and action plans requires a workforce that can build the capacity of communities to effectively design, plan, implement and evaluate strategies that are sustainable. Hence, national nutrition policies and PHN intervention management are both required in solving population nutrition problems. National nutrition policies set the strategic direction and (usually) provide the framework and resources for PHN action in local communities. Successful local action is reliant upon public health nutritionists taking a bottom-up approach, building community capacity for sustainable change and feeding evaluation results back to policy makers through literature publications and consultation contributions.

### Practice Note

Being aware of the budget allocation attached to national nutrition policies and action plans, and the various strategies within, is vital when trying to secure funding for local activities. It is important to note that many national mandates for action involve a collaboration of ministries which means that funding opportunities may come from education, agriculture, community services or planning departments, not solely the department for health. Noting annual government budget announcements is also essential to be aware of potential pools of money which may be applied for to support PHN interventions. In any application be sure to link your planned intervention to the strategic direction and actions outlined in the national nutrition policy. Where possible, make explicit reference to how your intervention plan addresses priorities and strategic directions outlined in national action plans.



National nutrition policies and action plans are not the only mandates for action that need considering in PHN intervention management. It is also necessary to consider the existing mandates of your own organisation, potential partners or competitors and possible funding agencies. Additional mandates for action that may require review, depending on the type of intervention, include relevant legislation and regulation, policies and guidelines or professional and ethical standards (10).

The importance of reviewing the mandate for action or strategic plan of your own organisation and partnering organisations is to ensure managerial and executive support of the proposed intervention. Presenting the intervention as a contribution towards the focused action for the organisation will help gain managerial support while, identifying commonalities will assist strengthen intervention partnerships.



Reviewing the strategic plans of competing organisations enhances awareness of their key objectives and can assist with developing strategies to deal with potential objections to the proposed intervention. A vast number of organisations have their strategic plans publicly available on their website, annual report, or are usually available upon request.

Aligning intervention objectives with the key strategic directions of a potential funding agency is essential to securing any financial assistance. A variety of potential funding agencies exist and the topic, nature and design of the particular PHN intervention will assist in determining which funding agency is most likely to be interested in providing financial support to your particular intervention. Local projects are commonly supported by local or regional agencies (health boards, local municipalities) or funding grants from commercial agencies with a philanthropic arm (eg. Health insurance companies etc). Broader funding opportunities may be available from the European Union or European Commission. Currently the Public Health Programme 2008-2013 provides funding to health interventions across member-countries. When making submissions to a funding agency it is vital to ensure that how intended PHN intervention contributes to the agencies action plan and that the intervention is strategically relevant (i.e. tied to national, regional government nutrition policies). The Public Health Programme for example, has 3 over-arching health objectives plus annual work plan priority areas. Applicants must articulate in their application how the intervention contributes to these priority areas and outline the interventions strategic relevance to European and national policy direction.

## Practice Note



Funding agencies and government bodies want to see that the interventions they are financing are contributing to the prioritised health objectives. Knowing the national and organisational mandates for action is a vital component of PHN intervention management and must be addressed in intervention plans and funding submissions. Highlighting how your intervention will contribute to priorities action areas and work plans demonstrates your understanding of the policy context and your interventions role in supporting the broader public health objectives. In short, this makes it easier for bureaucrats to support your plans.

## Exercise 3.



Consider your provided scenario and identify at least 3 mandates for action that are important to your particular issue and context. Ensure that 1 of the mandates is from a potential funding agency. Explain the reason for your selection and the impact these mandates have on your intervention development.

You will need to conduct a literature or web search to complete this task.

**Workshop/tutorial option:**

Complete the exercise in small groups followed by a whole-class debriefing

**CPD option:**

Conduct the above exercise in the context of your current work role. .

Intelligence >

Mandates for Action

Action

Evaluation



## Mandates for Action - Various Examples

### 1. European Union - Commission of the European Communities

WHITE PAPER: A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues

The purpose of this White Paper is to set out an integrated European Union approach to contribute to reducing ill health due to poor nutrition, overweight and obesity.

To view the full White Paper visit

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/nutrition/documents/nutrition\\_wp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/documents/nutrition_wp_en.pdf)

### 2. National Board of Health Denmark - Centre for Health Promotion and Prevention

National Action Plan Against Obesity.

This national action plan is for the prevention and treatment of obesity. The plan promotes a balanced view of weight and health, encourages inter-sectoral action and highlights action to be taken with various target groups.

To view the full action plan visit

[http://www.sst.dk/publ/publ2003/National\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.sst.dk/publ/publ2003/National_action_plan.pdf)

### 3. Richmond and Twickenham Primary Care Trust (PCT) is the National Health Service organisation responsible for health services in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

Organisational aim: to provide timely, effective, evidence-based health services determined by the needs of the population. There are 8 strategies listed to achieve this aim.

To view the full organisational aim and strategies visit

<http://www.richmondandtwickenham.nhs.uk/about-the-pct>

## Exercise 4.

Review your countries National Action Plan that best aligns with public health nutrition (refer to the WHO website: <http://data.euro.who.int/nutrition/> ).

Critically analyse to what extent the action plan:

- Describes resource allocation for implementation
- Describes how the Action plan will be evaluated and monitored

*Workshop/tutorial option:*

Complete the exercise in small groups followed by a whole-class debriefing





## Assessment



Review the scenario you have selected (from one of four provided). In the appropriate section of the intervention management template (see introduction and justification section) write a background justification for your intervention considering the policy context of the scenario. Use your responses from Exercise 3 to assist and address the contribution your intervention will make to the broader PHN picture. Limit this section to 200 words.

### *CPD option:*

Conduct the above exercise in the context of your current work role.

## Key Points



- National nutrition policies and action plans codify national government priorities for action. By highlighting the nutrition areas for action and target groups the PHN workforce effort can be focused and more effective at achieving the desired health outcomes.
- National nutrition policies and PHN intervention management are both required in solving population nutrition problems. National nutrition policies set the strategic direction and provide the framework for PHN action in local communities. PHN interventions build community capacity for sustainable change. Intervention evaluation results feedback to policy makers through literature publications and consultation.
- Considering the existing mandates of your own organisation, potential partners or competitors and possible funding agencies is necessary in PHN interventions to gain managerial and executive support and strengthen intervention partnerships.
- Linking the national and organisational mandates to PHN interventions must be addressed in intervention plans and funding submissions. Highlighting how the intervention will contribute to priorities action areas and work plans demonstrates an understanding of the policy context and the interventions role in supporting the broader public health objectives.

Intelligence >

Mandates for Action

Action

Evaluation



## Additional resources and readings

### Public Health Policy

- Tones, K. and Green, J. Healthy Public Policy, in *Health Promotion - planning and strategies*. 2004. SAGE Publications: London. p. 175-207.
- Naidoo, J., and Wills, J. The Policy Context, in *Public Health and Health Promotion*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) 2005. Bailliere Tindall, London. p. 67-85.

### National mandates for action

- Green, L. and Kreuter, M. 1991. *Health Promotion Planning: An educational and environmental approach*. 1991. Mountain View: Mayfield.
- World Health Organisation. *Comparative analysis of nutrition policies in the WHO European Region*. 2006. World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.
- World Health Organisation - Member State Documents, <http://www.who.int/infobase/dpas/dpas.aspx>

## References

1. Naidoo, J., and Wills, J. *Public Health and Health Promotion*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) 2005. Bailliere Tindall, London.
2. Tones, K. and Green, J. Healthy Public Policy, in *Health Promotion - planning and strategies*. 2004. SAGE Publications: London. p. 175-207.
3. Margetts, B. An overview of public health nutrition. In: *Public Health Nutrition*. Gibney M, Margetts B, Kearney J and Arab L. Eds. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. p:1-25
4. Walt, G. *Health Policy: An introduction to process and power*. 1994. Zed Books: London.
5. Food and Agricultural Organisation /World Health Organisation, *World Declaration on Nutrition*. 1992, FAO/WHO: Rome.
6. *The First Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy, WHO European Region, 2000-2005*. 2000, World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.
7. World Health Organisation. *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, Resolution of the Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly*. 2004. WHA 57.17, World Health Organisation: Geneva.
8. World Health Organisation. *Comparative analysis of nutrition policies in the WHO European Region*. 2006. World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.
9. World Health Organisation. *WHO European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007-2012*. 2008. World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Copenhagen.
10. The Health Communication Unit. *Introduction to Health Promotion Program Planning*. 2001. Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto: Toronto. pp 17-22.