

Food and Nutrition Security in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Report of the World Health Assembly Side-Event
May 20, 2014

Background

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have galvanized unprecedented global action toward a common vision of ending hunger and poverty. The world has halved the proportion of people who live in extreme poverty and has made substantial progress on other goals and targets. However, despite steady progress, much work remains both on the MDG's unfinished agenda and in addressing malnutrition, which was not adequately covered by the MDGs.

Globally, there are 162 million stunted children, and the number of stunted children *is rising* in Sub-Saharan Africa. Low birth weight, suboptimal breastfeeding, and anaemia have remained relatively stagnant over time, while the number of overweight children globally has doubled since 1990, reaching 43 million in 2010. In addition, 52 million children suffer from wasting or acute malnutrition. Reducing malnutrition in all its forms will build strong and resilient individuals, families, communities, and nations. Establishing a Post-2015 Development Framework is a key opportunity to act on the world's growing political momentum and will increase understanding of the importance of nutrition.

"...the issues of hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition are inextricably linked and critically important drivers—as well as results of—global poverty." **Toomas Palu, Health Sector Manager for the South East Asia and Pacific Region, World Bank**

Purpose

On May 20, during the 67th session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, the World Bank, UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), and 1,000 Days, with support from the Flemish government, organized a side-event on 'Food and Nutrition Security and

the Post-2015 Development Agenda' to discuss food and nutrition security's positioning in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its connection to efforts for scaling up progress toward global nutrition, health, poverty, and other development targets. This side-event provided an important platform to increase Member State and stakeholder commitment toward nutrition, health, and food security. Additionally, the event served as an opportunity to launch the first of six policy briefs and target-setting tools, under development by the World Health Organization (WHO) and 1,000 Days, which can guide national and local policymakers on what actions should be taken at scale in order to achieve progress against the WHA global nutrition targets (see side bar).

This side-event, through a mix of panel and audience discussions as well as remarks from Member States and UN representatives, reviewed how nutrition was reflected in the current set of MDGs, the results of this approach and the priority nutrition challenges for the next 15 years. This report summarizes the key messages that emerged from this event and articulates broadly held opinions about how to position nutrition in ongoing institutional and high-level dialogue and engagement in the coming years.

Programme

Following an introduction by Anita Bay Bundegaard, Director and UN Representative of Save the Children, a multi-stakeholder panel discussed strategic options for positioning food and nutrition security in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The panel comprised: Deborah Malta, Director of NCD Surveillance and Health Promotion at the Ministry of Health in Brazil; Asma Lateef, Director of Bread for the World Institute; Josh Lozman, Deputy Director, Global Policy & Advocacy at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Anna Lartey, Director of Nutrition at the Food and Agricultural

World Health Assembly-Endorsed Global Nutrition Targets for 2025:

- Reduce by 40% the global number of children under 5 who are stunted
- Reduce anaemia by 50% in women of reproductive age
- Reduce low birth weight by 30%
- No increase in childhood overweight
- Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months up to at least 50%
- Reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%

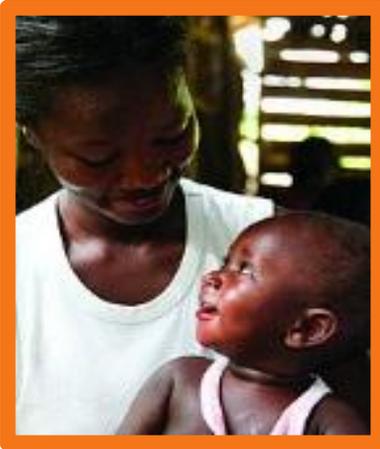


Photo credit: Bread for the World/Laura Elizabeth Pohl

Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

During the second part of the event, the WHO and USAID representatives discussed efforts to scale up and achieve the WHA nutrition targets by 2030 and launched a new policy brief on stunting and how to achieve the WHA target for it at country-level. Francesco Branca, Director of Nutrition for Health and Development at WHO, stated that : “These briefs are meant to help frame the problem and demonstrate priority actions [to reach the WHA targets] at the country-level... We are really trying to help countries have a discussion about how to combine actions.” Finally, David Nabarro, UNSG Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition, and Toomas Palu, Health Sector Manager for the World Bank’s South East Asia and Pacific Region, made concluding remarks and issued a call to further engage in the Post-2015 Development Agenda process.

Summary and Conclusions

Positioning nutrition in the Post-2015

Development Framework: There are several ways for nutrition to be addressed in the Post-2015 Development Framework. There is support for a single food and nutrition security goal, echoing the High-Level Panel Report and Open Working Group focus areas document.

Use an integrated and intersectoral approach to ensure sustainability: Food and nutrition security is inextricably linked to other key sectors, including health, agriculture, social protection, and WASH. As such, an integrated approach that recognizes these important linkages is key to ensuring sustainability in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, as progress in one sector will likely lead to improvements in nutrition and vice versa. However, a challenge will be how to put in place incentives that would encourage and make an integrated approach work. Deborah Malta highlighted Brazil’s successes in using a multisectoral approach and coordinating the delivery of a variety of social services across more than 17 government ministries and the need to learn from past MDGs and linkages across sectors.

Focus on people and communities that are most affected: There is growing consensus on the need to focus more directly on inequalities in order to achieve sustainable development outcomes, stemming from the broad recognition that the poorest and most marginalized have not benefitted equitably from the current MDGs framework. The Post-2015 Development Framework should be developed with active participation of people most affected by the issues of food and nutrition security, drawing on their lived experiences. As Anna Lartey, stated: “[We] must focus on people...[N]utrition problems affect the entire household and nutrition needs a call for action to get government, institutions, and people moving.” David Nabarro also stressed that the voice, argument, and persuasion for including nutrition on the Post-2015 Development Agenda needs to come from national leaders, as they are the power that drives the negotiations.

“As countries move from low to middle income levels, the need for country ownership will become more and more important, as well as domestic resource mobilization that puts in place public financing for nutrition programs.” Ariel Pablos-Méndez, USAID Assistant Administrator for Global Health

gathering and analysis, particularly on the different levels of nutritional status (both under- and over-nutrition), micronutrients, infant feeding practices, diet quality, and local availability and affordability of diverse nutritious foods. Additionally, Ariel Pablos-Méndez emphasized that investing in measurement capacity at country and local levels to gather real-time data and monitor progress will be especially important. In the long term, routinely collected nutrition data is needed to drive commitment and accountability.

“Like the MDGs, post 2015 will define the development space for decades to come... hunger and undernutrition are part of the unfinished agenda.” Asma Lateef, Director of the Bread for the World Institute

Improve systems and tools for data

collection: Better data is needed to monitor progress and drive commitment and accountability for achieving nutrition outcomes. Going forward, targets and indicators in the Post-2015 Development Agenda need to be supported by improved data