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Programme



The Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform

Symposium on sustainable food systems and nutrition governance
for healthy diets in Central Asia and Caucasus- through the eyes of
children and adolescents

&

the 2nd coordination meeting of the Regional Nutrition Capacity Development
and Partnership Platform, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, April 24-26th 2019



Regional Nutrition Capacity
Development and Partnership Platform
Central Asia & Caucasus

Joint statement; Regional Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition Governance for prevention of double burden of malnutrition in Central Asia and Caucasus- Through the eyes of children and adolescents, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, April 24-26th2019

In 20-21 July 2018 the Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform in Central Asia and Caucasus was established (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) as the sub-regional regional partnership oriented mechanism to develop the food system and nutrition governance capacities of 8 countries in Central Asia and Caucasus to tackle the double burden of malnutrition in the sub-region.

As a part of the platform's two-year plan of action, this symposium has been a milestone to reinforce the technical capacity of the country delegation composed of representatives from parliamentarians, ministries of finance, agriculture and food, health, and education on the agenda of food systems and nutrition governance for children and adolescents' healthy diet.

The participants deliberated on the various drivers, determinants and influencers of the overall food system framework for children and adolescents and built the consensus on importance and the integral role of Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition Governance for reducing and preventing the multiple-burden of malnutrition in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Innocenti Framework on Food Systems for Children and Adolescent served as the reference framework to comprehensively advance healthier diets to meet the nutrition requirements of various age groups of children.

The participants acknowledged that economic growth and rising incomes have nearly eliminated hunger and severe forms of undernutrition in Central Asia and Caucasus. However, insufficient focus on food systems on children and adolescents' diets and changes in lifestyles has resulted in increasing trends of overweight and obesity as well as micronutrient deficiencies among this age group. Participants recognized the massive loss to economic growth due to different forms of malnutrition and the huge economical returns on investment in nutrition.

Participants discussed and recognized the main priority areas of action under each of four determinants of the food system framework for children and adolescents, namely : 1) Food Supply Chains to promote dietary diversity of nutrient dense and fortified foods as well as , 2) external food environments (such as retail and commercial markets, school nutrition environments, informal food vendors and marketing of unhealthy food for children), 3) personal food environments (including accessibility, affordability, and convenience), and 4) behaviors of caregivers, children and adolescents which together shape children and adolescents' diets. Key influencers of all the determinants of the food systems for children and adolescents were contextually reviewed during the symposium.

Children and adolescents participated in the symposium and provided their experiences when it comes to the interaction with food systems as well as shared possible solutions and participants also highlighted the importance of applying child rights (Convention on the Rights of the Child) as a guiding principle in food system and nutrition programming for all children under the age of 18, especially in light of the 30th year anniversary.

Participants recognized that prevention of the multiple-burden of malnutrition can only be achieved if a multi-sectoral approach involving health, education, social protection and agriculture is adopted where food system avenue can play a convening role in bringing synergy to the collective work of all sectors. It was further recognized that intervention need to be started as early as possible in children's life to be more effective.

Governments of eight member states as major actors responsible for driving changes to food systems at the country level, are recommended to develop country-specific Policy concept with Action Plan for improving diets of children and adolescent from conception period throughout the life cycle, by strengthening sustainable and resilient nutrition sensitive food systems. The Symposium stressed the need for networking, sharing of knowledge and experiences for establishing close collaboration among nutrition capacity development networks

UNICEF, FAO, WHO, UNSCN and other partners, continue to actively support all the eight countries in Central Asia and Caucasus, and urged the countries to position child and adolescent nutrition priorities, higher on the development agenda and, as catalytic members of the Platform, pledge to work with governments to help strengthening their leadership and capacity to undertake time-bound actions.

The participants recognized the importance of providing opportunities for delegates representing health, finance, agriculture and food and education sectors to come together from different Member States in the region to discuss the nutrition agenda as it allows to understand the perspectives with the views of different sectors. This process can result in having nutrition champions in each sector who can support the nutrition agenda at national level and create coalition to improve overall inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral coordination for actions at national level.

UN agencies and the representative of eight member states agreed to actively advocate for better and strategic integration of coherent nutrition agenda in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Governments of member states recognized the need to strengthen data collection, and analysis for evidence-based policy and programming in nutrition sensitive food systems for children and adolescents, including food consumption and nutrition data, surveillance of child growth and nutritional status of the population and data on minimum dietary diversity. It was also recommended to collaborate region-wide to generate applied evidence with built capacity of laboratories service and support development of evidence-informed policy and guidelines including Regional Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) with particular focus on the dietary needs of children and adolescents as well as to strengthen the capacity of Food Nutrition and Health research infrastructure (FNH-RI).

The delegates recognized the need to reposition nutrition services in the PHC system to respond to the multiple-burden of malnutrition including defining the minimum needed workforce at PHC level; enhance the capacity of the nutrition workforce with the right set of knowledge, skills and competency sets (short, mid and long-term strategies).

The members of the regional partnership platform also reviewed the progress on the activities of the platform and built consensus on the main priority actions of the platform's work plan and agreed on the tentative date of the next meeting which will focus on harmonization of nutrition standards and raising capacity of nutrition laboratory services.

The symposium which was financially supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands was attended by 110 participants from eight member states and experts from over 10 countries, a group of school children and adolescents from Kazakhstan as well as specialized United Nations agencies including UNSCN, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, EU-EFSA and CAPNUTRA, donor community including USAID, and representing various stakeholders, government officials including Parliamentarians, research and academic institutions

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References:

1. ICN2 Rome Declaration (2014) : <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>
2. ICN2 Framework for Action: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>
3. Member States further committed, under targets 2.1 and 2.2, “By 2030, [to] end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round” and “By 2030, [to] end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving by 2025 the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.”
4. Food systems for children and adolescents, the Innocenti Framework, 2018
5. http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259
6. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), using coordination mechanisms such as the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
7. Key messages from the Regional Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets in Europe and Central Asia held on 4-5 December 2017 in Budapest <http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/1034293/>
8. <http://undocs.org/E/2018/L.16>
9. FAO/WHO , “Strengthening Nutrition Action”A resource guide for countries based on the policy recommendations of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), 2018 <http://www.fao.org/3/ca1505en/CA1505EN.pdf>