

A CALL TO ACTION

■ ■ ■ Make the 2016 WHA the first achievement of the Decade of Action on nutrition

The World Health Assembly (WHA) is an important forum to influence the global health policy landscape. The 69th WHA represents a critical window of opportunity to sustain much needed nutrition momentum to help achieve previously set WHA targets and the SDGs, and accelerate progress towards the global goals. Thus, we urge Member states to ensure that resolutions voted in 2016 are reflective of a high level of ambition to adequately launch the Decade of Action on Nutrition.

Background

In 2012, the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted the resolution WHA65.6 which endorsed the **Comprehensive Implementation Plan (CIP) on maternal, infant and young child nutrition**. This document established **six global targets to be achieved by 2025** on stunting, wasting, anaemia, exclusive breastfeeding, low birth weight, and childhood overweight, and outlined five action areas for the same. The CIP is an important step towards the improvement of maternal, infant and young child nutrition across all countries. This resolution also requested the Director-General to provide guidance on inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children. Yet, the Secretariat's Progress Report highlights that the **progress in rolling out the CIP, as well as in the implementation the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes remains insufficient**.

On 1 April 2016, we saw new impetus for tackling malnutrition in all its forms. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) agreed a resolution proclaiming **the Decade of Action (DoA) on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025**. As recalled by WHO¹, it "aims to trigger intensified action to end hunger and eradicate malnutrition worldwide, and ensure universal access to healthier and more sustainable diets – for all people, wherever they are and wherever they live". We welcome this bold and ambitious announcement which seeks to accelerate efforts to tackle malnutrition and ensure we leave no one behind.

WHO, along with FAO, is an official lead in the implementation of the DoA and has a role to play in ensuring success over this decade, and in linking with various existing international and national plans and frameworks. The WHA is a key moment for member states to reaffirm this. Nutrition has often been seen as a standalone vertical field and there is a growing consensus that it needs to be adequately mainstreamed into wider health frameworks, such as the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' health.

To roll out the Decade of Action a clear agenda is essential. **It is now crucial that this DoA does not remain an empty shell. The opportunity of the 69th WHA should be seized as the ambitious first step to pave the way towards a new nutrition era and to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.**

What do we need now ?

It is critical that WHO suggests ambitious next steps guided by the CIP, and acknowledges that many measures still need to be taken at the national level to ensure progress for nutrition. In this perspective, **we call for the WHA to adopt a resolution on the Decade of Action**. Such a resolution does not aim to replace a much-needed and ambitious guidance and resolution on infant and young child feeding; it rather aims to complete it. This additional resolution should also support ambitious and clear roll-out of the DoA, the need for global nutrition targets to be better translated into national level targets to monitor progress, and for **increased financing** to ensure achievement of the DoA objectives as well as to sustain this progress, as well as the key elements detailed below.

¹ See: http://www.who.int/nutrition/GA_decade_action/en/

This second resolution should include the following **priority actions**:

1. Establishment of national nutrition targets

In addition to the WHA global nutrition targets, the Sustainable Development Goals sets the objective to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030 (Goal 2) and specifically to reduce wasting and stunting (target 2.2) as highlighted in the CIP. Yet, limited implementation of the CIP has meant so far that many countries lack national targets that guide efforts on these nutrition targets and measure progress towards them. Countries have either integrated none or just some of the six targets in their national policies and plans, or their targets are outdated. For example, out of 21 countries that set targets at the 2013 Nutrition for Growth Summit, only three countries committed to a 2025 target. Most of the others only committed through 2016, sometimes 2020. A mapping conducted by Generation Nutrition² revealed that among 39 countries, none had a national **breastfeeding** target for 2025; and only Chad and Guinea had **wasting** targets through 2025.

A WHA resolution should urge Member States to set ambitious national targets, informed by the global nutrition targets, and in line with national priorities and contexts. It should call on all relevant United Nations agencies including the WHO, civil society and other stakeholders to support this process.

National targets are essential in order to **prioritize nutrition; guide processes, interventions and resources; and monitor progress in a country's development agenda.**

- As a **useful planning tool**: they can help set into motion a comprehensive planning process that identifies concrete actions and resources to effectively translate commitments into action and results. This will facilitate the measuring of needed interventions and assist efforts by governments to tailor their responses to their particular needs.

- An **accountability tool**: Clear targets - including interim targets, and outcome targets for 2025 – facilitate the effective review of the global nutrition monitoring framework. They reflect Member States' commitment to move towards the goal of eradicating malnutrition, and are hence a way to hold countries to account for their success (or lack of) reaching the targets they set for themselves.

- National targets will help promote **partner alignment** to meet national priorities, and thus, facilitate a more synergistic effort by countries and international partners to work together to tackle malnutrition in-country.

2. Data collection regarding the adoption and implementation of national targets

Data on whether countries have national targets, and where countries stand on their targets is needed to monitor the processes which will be launched with the DoA. 49% of countries do not have enough nutrition data to determine whether or not they are on track to meet the global targets³. Disaggregated data on age and sex is still insufficient.

A WHA resolution should urge Member States to collect and provide data regarding adoption and implementation of national targets, with the support of all relevant stakeholders.

The WHO target tracking tool allows countries to understand the annual rates of reduction (or increase) required to meet each target. Yet there is no global repository of countries which have set national targets. Data is critical to assess progress, identify gaps, and help address these gaps through more streamlined resources, interventions, and partnerships.

Monitoring of the countries which have already set targets, and whether these targets are SMART (specific, measurable, assignable, relevant, and time bound) or not can **also become a part of the global monitoring of the progress of the DoA** and the Framework For Action, thus ensuring sustained efforts.

3. Increase of funding for nutrition

The fight against tackling malnutrition in all its forms is severely underfinanced, especially for the most cost-effective nutrition specific-interventions⁴. The lack of funding is continuously affirmed: the WHO Secretariat reports that **funding for nutrition “still does not meet global needs”**. The Lancet series on breastfeeding highlighted that increased financial investments are needed to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding to realise its advantages to children, women, and society.

A WHA resolution should call on Member States and all relevant stakeholders to mobilise adequate resources to implement, monitor and evaluate the CIP, in alignment with the costing conducted by the World bank with WHO technical support.

The WHA target costing⁵ aims at assessing the **financial resources needed to reach three of the six global nutrition targets**: stunting, anemia and breastfeeding - and to treat severe acute malnutrition. It assumes that the resource gap will be closed through a coordinated effort to mobilize additional resources from countries, donors, private sources, and innovative financing mechanisms. It is estimated that an average annual investment of US\$7 billion additional financing from 2016 to 2025, which corresponds to the DoA, is needed for these four target areas⁶. On **wasting** alone, a total of US\$9.1 billion is needed by 2025, which is included in the US\$7 billion needed each year. To catalyse progress towards these targets, scaling up a limited set of most cost-effective interventions for nutrition will require only an additional US\$2 billion each year over the next decade. The returns on these investments in the form of improved inter-generational health and exponentially increased human potential is massive.

2016 is a **big opportunity to pledge** more financial resources: a resolution at the WHA calling to increase financial mobilization will greatly influence the outcomes of forthcoming nutrition conferences and contribute to make them ambitious pledging moments.

What is next?

It is essential that Member States make the 69th World Health Assembly an ambitious moment for the DoA. We call Member states therefore to sponsor and vote a resolution on the Decade of the Action on nutrition.

More specifically, the 2016 WHA should be the first achievement of the DoA, by mobilising health actors on nutrition. To do so, WHO and Member States should:

- reaffirm the need for national targets based on the global nutrition targets, and to monitor progress towards them;
- reaffirm the need for increased financing for nutrition;
- recognise that WHO is responsible for the health component of nutrition in the DoA, and mandate the WHO to safeguard this health component within multi-sectoral discussions throughout the implementation of the DoA;
- reiterate that the CIP actions are guiding principles and establish that the global nutrition targets should be used as outcome indicators.

Finally, as undernutrition should become a public health priority, it is crucial that WHO, beyond the additional resolution:

- continues to ensure that nutrition is adequately mainstreamed in various health initiatives;
- fosters closer alignment between the **operational framework for EVERY WOMAN EVERY CHILD/the Global Strategy** and a) the targets, and b) priority actions committed in the CIP.

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² Generation Nutrition (2016) Mapping of national nutrition targets and commitments in 39 countries (to be published)

³ WHO Secretariat (2016). Progress report on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition. 138th Session of the Executive Board (EB138). Provisional agenda item 6.1

⁴ Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: what

can be done and at what cost? The Lancet 382: 452-477. Shekar, M et al. (2014).

⁵ Shekar M, Kakietek J, D'Alimonte M, Walters D, Rogers H, Dayton Everwein J, Soe-Lin S, Hecht R. (2016) Investing in nutrition the foundation for development: an Investment Framework to reach the Global Nutrition Targets

⁶ From which \$49.5 B additional for stunting and \$9.1 B additional for wasting.



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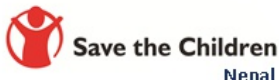
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