

Healthy lives and thriving societies

Bringing 'Nutrition for Growth' back on track in 2017.

In recent years, the UK Government has played an important role in raising the global focus on malnutrition, a development challenge that leads to millions of unnecessary child deaths and wasted human potential, but one that is entirely preventable. In 2013, then Prime Minister David Cameron established the 'Nutrition for Growth' ('N4G') agenda, which resulted in \$4 billion of new funding for direct nutrition programmes and \$19 billion for programmes which indirectly tackle malnutrition.

Four years on, there's a serious risk that progress in tackling malnutrition will falter, and there is much more to be done. Around 3 million children still die each year from malnutrition, and over 200 million children are deprived of achieving their true potential. Bill and Melinda Gates have rightly said that 'nutrition remains the single biggest missed opportunity in health'. Despite a growing body of evidence on solutions, nutrition is severely underfunded.

The Department for International Development (DFID) continues to support the N4G agenda, working with other international donors to set out a roadmap for securing further financial and policy commitments. With potential opportunities to show leadership at the World Bank Meetings in April and October, the G7 meeting of world leaders in May, and World Food Day in October, now is a good time for the UK Government to turn its support into concrete action by announcing new resources for nutrition in 2017, and encouraging others to follow suit.

This month, we are asking you to write to the Secretary of State for International Development, Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, commending her keen interest in the Nutrition for Growth agenda, and calling for an ambitious announcement which matches the scale of this leadership.

Undernutrition is still a huge problem

Undernutrition causes around 3 million children under five to lose their lives every year, and compromises the growth and development of at least 200 million more. Poor nutrition harms almost every aspect of children's early development, making them more susceptible to deadly diseases, and reducing their ability to learn at school and to earn a living later in life. It disproportionately affects women and girls, hindering their ability to survive and thrive. Despite this, donor aid to nutrition has been stagnant at around 1% of total aid, and even governments only spend just over 1% of their national budgets on it. This major development and economic challenge costs the global economy around \$3.5 trillion each year, and is severely underfunded.

According to the [2016 Global Nutrition Report](#), the world is way off track to meet the global targets on nutrition. At the current rate of effort, we won't reach the targeted reductions in anaemia in women until 2124 and in stunting (a child being too short for its age) until the mid-2030s. Ending other forms of malnutrition will take much longer. To bring about a transformational change to the lives of millions of

women and children worldwide, and to promote economic prosperity, we need to increase investments in nutrition now.

Investing in nutrition makes economic sense

Every £1 invested in evidence-based interventions – such as improving nutrition for adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, tackling vitamin and mineral deficiencies, improving infant and young child feeding, treatment of severe acute malnutrition in children – can yield at least £16 in return. Nutrition is the key to achieving progress on at least 12 out of the 17 Global Goals, including those on health, education, gender, and equality. This is why it needs to be at the heart of the UK's development agenda.

The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) agenda

In June 2013, then Prime Minister David Cameron established the 'Nutrition for Growth' ('N4G') agenda. Through this, the UK led efforts to bring together governments, businesses, scientists and civil society to raise \$4 billion in nutrition-specific funding (interventions which directly tackle malnutrition, such as vitamin or mineral supplements) and \$19 billion in nutrition-sensitive funding (programmes such as water,

sanitation and hygiene or agriculture programmes, which indirectly aid nutrition), in order to reduce child stunting globally by 20 million by 2020. The current government has made a further commitment to improve nutrition for 50 million people by 2020.

The London N4G summit was meant to be followed by one of a similar if not higher ambition in Rio in 2016. However, political uncertainties led to a weak event with no additional resources or commitments made to sustain progress for nutrition. Many of you took action in August 2016 asking the UK Government to influence other governments coming together at the Rio Olympics to pledge resources for nutrition. Though this didn't happen, the UK Government is keen to continue to support the Nutrition for Growth agenda.

The UK's position: the 2017 Roadmap

We await the launch of DFID's delayed new position paper on nutrition in Spring 2017, to guide its investments and programmes. However, from recent DFID publications such as their Economic Development strategy, and their Bilateral Development review, it is apparent that nutrition continues to be a priority for the new Secretary of State, alongside her focus on women and girls.

DFID recently released 'The Nutrition for Growth: 2017 Roadmap', which outlines plans to work with others to "make 2017 a Nutrition for Growth year to re-energise the nutrition community, bring others on board, and to kick start the '[UN Decade of Action](#)'" on nutrition.

The paper outlines opportunities over the year to secure significant financial and policy commitments to nutrition, to enable sharing, learning and innovation, and to foster a culture of transparency and accountability. The roadmap also proposes bringing the 2017 N4G to a close around World Food Day in October, through a celebration of collective commitments made to nutrition over the year by donor ministries and foundations, governments, civil society

and multilateral agencies, and establish a process of transparent tracking of progress against these commitments.

The UK's record on nutrition

While David Cameron initiated the N4G agenda, the Secretary of State Priti Patel [recently expressed interest in increased spending on nutrition](#). Now is the time to commend her for DFID's continued interest in nutrition, and encourage her to demonstrate leadership by scaling up impact for nutrition through greater and better resources and programmes.

Having shown powerful leadership on tackling malnutrition, the UK is in a prime position to influence other governments, and lead the way to securing meaningful financial and policy commitments in the coming year. We would like you to ask Priti Patel to turn her support for nutrition, and women and girls into an ambitious financial commitment. Improving nutrition not only saves lives; it transforms the lives of women and girls, helping them lead better and more productive lives, free from poverty. The UK must continue to ensure the momentum to tackle malnutrition globally is not lost, the global nutrition targets are met, and the Global Goals become a reality.

Why now?

There are several opportunities approaching, with countries gathering at the World Bank in April, shortly followed by the G7 Summit in May. DFID is already in discussion with the World Bank to host an event in April to raise the profile for nutrition. Now is an opportune time for the UK to lead by example to secure ambitious commitments, and announce new resources for nutrition, which are then allocated to those programmes which deliver the greatest impact for nutrition.

Take action

Please write to Secretary of State for International Development, Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, thanking her for showing commitment to nutrition, and commending the Nutrition for Growth agenda as a focus for continued UK leadership. Ask her to demonstrate this leadership by making a concrete announcement at a suitable high level moment on nutrition during 2017, including an ambitious financial commitment to nutrition programmes.

Address: Secretary of State for International Development, Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, Department for International Development, 22 Whitehall, London SW1A 2EG, or email: pssofs@dfid.gov.uk