

Nutrition for growth

The outcomes of the June 8th Hunger Summit

Over the last year, the issue of undernutrition has been rising up the political agenda, both nationally and internationally. Here we chart some key dates and their impact on the global response and detail the pledges at the 'Nutrition for Growth' event.

2008 - First Lancet series on Maternal & Child Nutrition

This series of academic articles identified regional and global levels of undernutrition, as well as the effects it has on health and economic development.

The series also identified 13 life-saving interventions, from exclusive breastfeeding to taking folic acid supplements.

2012 - Copenhagen Consensus find nutrition interventions provide best value for money

The Copenhagen Consensus is a not-for-profit organisation that seeks to use economic analysis to 'advance global welfare'. The group assesses solutions to a particular global problem – undernutrition for example- and then analyse the interventions. At their 2012 conference they found that nutrition specific interventions deliver some of the best value for money of all development interventions and recommended that preventing undernutrition in young children should be a top priority for policymakers.

2013 - Lancet series on Maternal & Child Nutrition

Following on from their 2008 work, the Lancet released a second series on undernutrition. Building on their previous efforts, this piece formalised growing international consensus among stakeholders on the causes of undernutrition; the 10 most high impact interventions for treating it; and how much it would cost to implement those interventions to reach 90% coverage.

2013 - Nutrition for Growth

The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) event - 'Beating Hunger through Business and Science' – was a follow

up event to the political commitments made at the Olympic Hunger Summit in 2012, which highlighted the need to transform the life chances of millions of children by improving their nutrition.

Andrew Mitchell (former Minister for DFID) said:

"As we focus on the legacy of these wonderful London Olympics, we have a chance to give millions of the world's poorest children a better start to life. We know that better nutrition for mothers and infants in the first 1,000 days from the start of pregnancy can stop the irreversible effects of malnutrition."

A year later, the UK, alongside the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and the government of Brazil, co-hosted the event in June, which brought together heads of state from the G8, high burden countries, NGOs and major donors to make financial, as well as policy, commitments for nutrition.

An issue that has historically been underfunded and deprioritised raised a total of \$4.1 billion in commitments to tackle undernutrition by 2020. Of this \$4.1 billion, \$2.9 billion has been given upfront as 'core funding' the remainder is tied into 'matched funding'. This means that governments like the UK will only give a certain amount of their pledge when the country they are giving it to also put up money. This encourages developing countries to prioritise their spending on undernutrition in order to get the most out of donor commitments.

The participants committed their countries and organisations by 2020 to:

- improving the nutrition of 500 million pregnant women and young children;
- reducing the number of children under five who are stunted by an additional 20 million;
- saving the lives of at least 1.7 million children by preventing stunting, increasing breastfeeding and better treatment of severe and acute malnutrition (wasting).

The UK Commitment

The UK Government committed to triple their investment in nutrition specific-programmes (those that directly impact undernutrition; rather than underlying issues like education for example) between 2013 and 2020; a total of £375 million in additional money from 2010 levels. They also committed to further additional investment in nutrition-specific programmes between 2013 and 2020 of £280 million if matched by others. Together this will total £655 million between 2013 and 2020.

Other major donors

The EU pledged to commit as much as €410 million (\$533 million) for nutrition specific interventions between 2014-2020, and as much as €3.1 billion on nutrition sensitive interventions between the same time frame.

CIFF committed a further \$700 million to address nutrition, bringing their total commitment to \$793 million over the period 2013-2020.

Business commitments

22 businesses pledged to improve the nutrition and consequently the productivity and health over 927,000 workforce members in 80 countries.

Policy commitments

The Democratic Republic of Congo committed to develop a National Nutrition Policy, strengthen leadership and develop a high-level coordination mechanism, integrate nutrition across sectors, contribute to adequate financing of nutrition activities, and remove all taxes from nutrition commodities.

Uganda would put in place an integrated nutrition surveillance system that will take stock of the nutrition status of the community, district and national levels.

Value for money

While we don't know yet how the money will be used, we know that it has the potential to have tremendous value for money:

A package of proven, lifesaving measures – of micronutrient powders, therapeutic zinc, vitamin A supplements, deworming medication, and iron and

folic-acid for pregnant women – can be delivered for just £5 (\$8) per year per child. Every \$1 spent to reduce stunting saves up to \$138 in the long term.

Accountability

There are several on-going processes looking at how 'Nutrition for Growth' pledges, as well as overall improvements in rates of undernutrition will be monitored:

1. DFID is leading on developing an accountability framework that will monitor progress on 'Nutrition for Growth' pledges.
2. The World Health Organization (WHO) met in early October for a technical meeting to discuss how to address data gaps and what types of data will be gathered as part of monitoring progress towards undernutrition targets.
3. The EU and Canada are working together to look at innovative ways to address critical data gaps.

We are working with our partners in other countries to influence the WHO and EU and Canadian work,

The road to Rio

The Brazilian government has offered to host a nutrition event during the next Olympics, 1000 days after the initial summit. The ambition of the summit is to track progress made at the 2013 Nutrition for Growth event, and we anticipate this could be a moment for countries to make additional financial and political pledges.