

Maternal, infant and young child nutrition: implementation plan

Report by the Secretariat

1. In May 2010, the Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA63.23 on infant and young child nutrition. Inter alia, it urged Member States to increase political commitment to preventing and reducing malnutrition in all its forms, to expedite implementation of the global strategy on infant and young child feeding, and to expand interventions. The Health Assembly also requested the Director-General to provide support to Member States in expanding their nutritional interventions and to develop a comprehensive implementation plan on infant and young child nutrition as a critical component of a global multisectoral nutrition framework.
2. In January 2011 the Executive Board at its 128th session noted an earlier version of this report and made proposals on how to modify the comprehensive implementation plan before country and regional consultations and in preparation for the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly.¹ Proposals included changing the name of the plan to cover maternal nutrition as well and dealing more clearly with the double burden of undernutrition and overweight.
3. This report illustrates the preparatory process for the implementation plan and provides a summary outline of a draft comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

PREPARATORY PROCESS

4. Four background papers have been drafted to aid preparation of the draft plan.²
 - (a) The first paper presents a situation analysis of nutrition policies and programmes, based on the responses received from 116 countries on the results of questionnaire reviews of national nutrition policy conducted in 2009 and 2010. Data were also extracted from WHO's databases on nutrition. The document aims to identify both gaps and good practices in the design and implementation of nutrition policies and programmes. The analysis indicates that, although most Member States have nutrition policies and programmes, those instruments have not always been officially adopted, do not comprehensively address all the nutrition challenges and do not articulate operational plans and programmes of work. Few of the 36 countries with the greatest

¹ See document EB128/2011/REC/2, summary record of the tenth meeting.

² Available at <http://www.who.int/nutrition/EB128>.

burden of undernutrition fully implement the complete set of interventions against child underweight and maternal undernutrition or ensure the continuum of care.

(b) The second background paper reviews effective nutrition actions, summarizing what is known about health interventions that can improve the nutritional status of women and young children, and including different options for their delivery and examples of good practice for implementation at country level. These actions include health interventions with an impact on nutrition (such as behavioural change in communities and health facilities, provision of micronutrient supplements to children, adolescents and women, targeted nutritional support, and nutritional support in emergencies); and non-health interventions with an impact on nutrition (improving agriculture and increasing food production, social protection, provision of information, and measures in the trade, education and labour sectors). The paper provides the rationale for the inclusion of such interventions in the draft plan.

(c) The third document presents a model for the preparation of country plans for expanding nutrition activities. It provides guidance on how to implement context mapping, establish nutrition goals, choose among policy and programme options, involve stakeholders, assess financial and human resource requirements, and establish governance structures. Existing food and nutrition policies need to be revised so as to include actions directly implemented through the health sector and a mechanism for ensuring that nutrition is placed centrally in other sectoral policies and in overall development policy. Collaboration between partners at national and international levels will be crucial for successful implementation of the comprehensive implementation plan. The leadership of country government officials in the preparation of national plans must be recognized, but the involvement of organizations in the United Nations system, donors, civil society and the private sector should be promoted.

(d) The fourth document presents a framework for monitoring implementation of programmes and policies, achievement of results, and use of resources. It lists policies, process and outcome indicators, provides definitions and sets out data-collection procedures. The indicators have been selected to take into account other intersectoral initiatives with common determinants, and include markers of nutrition outcomes, food security, implementation of nutrition programmes, and the policy environment. The aim of the document is to facilitate the selection of the core monitoring indicators that should be included in the comprehensive implementation plan.

5. All four documents have been submitted to Member States for consultation through an Internet-based process. Additional discussions will take place at regional level and, when possible, national level. It is proposed that national and regional consultations involve a broad range of stakeholders including representatives of different government sectors (for instance, health, agriculture, social welfare, education, trade, finance, environment and industry), organizations in the United Nations system, development banks, donors, civil society, and the private sector. The aim of the national consultations will be to collect feedback on the background papers and the draft comprehensive implementation plan, and to discuss the elements to be included in country plans. The aim of the regional consultations will be to consolidate the country contributions and perspectives in the comprehensive implementation plan, and to discuss the commitment of development partners to supporting implementation of proposed actions. As a first step, and considering the high burden of malnutrition, regional consultations have been organized in the African and the South-East Asia regions for this purpose.

SUMMARY OUTLINE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN ON MATERNAL, INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD NUTRITION

6. The comprehensive implementation plan will include a series of actions to be implemented by Member States, the Secretariat and development partners committed to supporting improvement of nutrition globally. An extended outline is available.¹

7. The first section of the comprehensive implementation plan will indicate the scope of nutritional issues that governments and development partners will have to tackle. The second section will describe the state of implementation of policies and programmes to reduce the double burden of malnutrition. The third section will include objectives, targets and a time frame.

8. The second section of the comprehensive implementation plan will illustrate the implementation of actions by Member States, the Secretariat and international partners in five areas, involving multiple sectors. The following five actions are envisaged:

- to create a supportive environment for the implementation of comprehensive food and nutrition policies;
- to include high-priority health interventions with an impact on nutrition in national health and nutrition plans;
- to stimulate the implementation of non-health interventions with an impact on nutrition;
- to provide sufficient human and financial resources for the implementation of health interventions with an impact on nutrition;
- to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies and programmes.

LINK WITH EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORKS

9. The global strategy on infant and young-child feeding, endorsed by the Health Assembly in 2002 (resolution WHA55.25), advocates comprehensive national policies, drafted after thorough needs assessments, that aim to foster environments that protect, promote and support appropriate infant and young-child feeding practices. The Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, endorsed in 2004 (resolution WHA57.17), recognizes that a life-course perspective is essential for covering all aspects of nutrition. The action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases endorsed in 2008 (resolution WHA61.14), include the promotion of breastfeeding and complementary feeding among the key interventions for reducing shared modifiable risk factors for noncommunicable diseases.

10. Several regional strategies have highlighted the need to address the double burden of malnutrition. The African Union's Revised African Regional Nutritional Strategy 2005–2015 urged greater awareness among Africa's leaders of the essential contribution of food and nutrition security to

¹ Available at <http://www.who.int/nutrition/EB128>.

the implementation of strategies for socioeconomic development of the continent and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The WHO European action plan for food and nutrition policy adopted in 2007 by the Regional Committee for Europe¹ highlighted maternal and child nutrition as a priority intervention area. In 2010 PAHO's Directing Council in resolution CD50.R11 endorsed the strategy and approved the plan of action for the reduction of chronic malnutrition. In 2010 the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, in resolution EM/RC57/R.4, endorsed the regional strategy on nutrition 2010–2019. At the Thirty-ninth Pacific Islands Forum (Alofi, Niue, 19–20 August 2008), Pacific island leaders “committed their governments to immediate action to address food security issues nationally and where possible regionally through a range of measures across key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, trade and transport” and, in April 2010, ministers of health, agriculture and trade from 22 Pacific countries and areas adopted a Framework for Action on Food Security in the Pacific.

11. In 2009 and 2010 representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations and development banks, donor agencies, civil society, the research community in consultation with the private sector prepared a framework of action for reducing undernutrition,² with the purpose of accelerating progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The framework identifies two complementary ways of reducing undernutrition: (a) direct, nutrition-specific interventions, which have nutritional improvement as the primary goal and should be accessible to all individuals and their households, especially in pregnancy, in the first two years of life and at times of illness or distress; and (b) a multisectoral approach aimed at promoting adequate nutrition as the goal of national development policies in agriculture, food supply, social protection, health and education programmes. In 2010 a road map was issued,³ envisaging three to five years of intensive efforts with the sustained commitment of a broad range of stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels. The road map envisages multi-stakeholder processes at local and national levels that aim to help programme staff, organizations and society effectively to expand activities on nutrition. The comprehensive implementation plan will provide an important contribution to the global movement to scale up nutrition.

12. A good link between food security and nutrition has been established through the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. In 2010 this body updated its comprehensive framework for action, highlighting the need to consider food and nutrition security and giving extra emphasis on social protection and safety nets through interventions for better nutrition and dietary diversity. In October 2010, the Committee on World Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) undertook to prepare a global strategic framework for food security and nutrition by October 2012;⁴ this framework will inform and complement the comprehensive implementation plan. Strategies and programme experience in linking food security and nutrition will also be discussed at the International Conference on Nutrition, scheduled to be held in 2012 and being jointly convened by FAO and WHO. In September 2010 the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, which inter alia stresses the need to ensure exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, to

¹ Resolution EUR/RC57/R4 and *WHO European action plan for food and nutrition policy 2007–2012*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2008.

² Scaling up nutrition: a framework for action: http://www.unscn.org/files/Announcements/Scaling_Up_Nutrition-A_Framework_for_Action.pdf.

³ A road map for scaling-up nutrition: first edition, September 2010. <http://un-foodsecurity.org/sites/default/files/SUNRoadMap.pdf>.

⁴ Document CFS 2010/2.

prevent and treat malnutrition and to improve overall nutrition of mothers and children. Nutrition interventions and policies can be the source of additional benefits for other intersectoral health initiatives, such as those committed to in the Libreville Declaration on Health and the Environment (2008) or national action plans on the social determinants of health. The comprehensive implementation plan will seek overall coherence with other multisectoral frameworks for intervention and evaluation.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

13. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report and comment on the outline of the comprehensive implementation plan for maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

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