

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AGAINST CHILD UNDERNUTRITION

Paris, 14-15 May 2013



Bridging the nutrition security gap in Sub-Saharan Africa: a pathway to resilience and development

Seizing momentum for child nutrition

In 2013, several events and advocacy moments will provide an opportunity to discuss nutrition and its importance within a more global development framework. Two important reports are also expected: the release of a new UNICEF report on global progress in child and maternal nutrition and the launch of the second series on nutrition in *The Lancet*.

International mobilization around nutrition has never been stronger, in particular with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. More and more stakeholders are becoming convinced that not only is it crucial to effectively address child undernutrition as a prerequisite for development, but also that it is possible. Strong consensus has emerged on the "1,000 days" window of opportunity, the critical period between the conception and the second birthday of a child, when actions have the most impact on child development, and will ultimately boost social and economic progress.

An ambitious set of goals on stunting and acute malnutrition has been adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2012. These goals are attainable, but only if concrete, effective interventions are implemented at scale and if the key importance of child undernutrition is integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

This high-level meeting will build on the global momentum to focus on child undernutrition, highlighting both the urgent need and unprecedented opportunity to address this problem in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in doing so to strengthen social and economic progress and resilience in a region that has fallen behind in terms of child nutrition. Momentum in Africa is also building to tackle the problem, and this conference will highlight the way forward.

AN EVENT ORGANIZED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



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An intolerable situation, yet solutions exist

There are multiple causes for undernutrition: cyclical food insecurity, poor infant and young child feeding, social and cultural factors, diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, HIV and AIDS, limited access to water and sanitation, and limited access to health and social services.

Only in Sub-Saharan Africa does this mix of factors reach such a high degree of severity, creating challenges for child survival, development and stability. Prevalence of stunting caused by chronic undernutrition remains stubbornly high at close to 40 per cent, while under-five mortality is still at unacceptable levels in most of the region's nations.

In the Sahel region, chronic food and nutrition insecurity keeps resulting in seasonal peaks of acute malnutrition that can reach a high intensity, as during the 2012 crisis. And the problem extends beyond Sahel countries – in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, more than one million children suffered from severe acute malnutrition last year.

There is some good news: capacity to respond to the consequences of acute food shortage has improved, and there has been progress on interventions against the most life-threatening forms of undernutrition. In the Sahel region alone, during the 2012 crisis, UNICEF and partners provided 850,000 children with adequate treatment for severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

Strategies to reduce stunting and acute malnutrition and improve treatment of SAM have been implemented at scale in some countries with encouraging results. These interventions must be sustained and interlinked with health, agriculture and other sectors.

These successful initiatives can be used as an inspiration for other countries in the region. Sharing of experiences and lessons learned has the potential to further reduce child mortality, promote national development and poverty reduction, and create resilience for the future.

Mobilize for children, ahead of the G8

The conference will drive momentum for political commitment around the scale-up in Sub-Saharan Africa of evidence-based and cost-effective nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive strategies, focused on tackling the problem of child undernutrition. Given the current environment of budget constraints, particular emphasis will be placed on assessing the cost, impact and expected return on investment of interventions.

This high-level event will review the specific causes and magnitude of the problem in Sub-Saharan Africa, and will address key issues:

— POLICY APPROACHES: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS UNDERNUTRITION?

Political will and public commitment are instrumental to creating an enabling environment for the process of developing, costing and adopting a multisectoral national nutrition plan. Effective approaches can be scaled up and adopted across the region.

— INTERVENTIONS: WHAT WORKS?

Which multi-sector, context-specific operational approaches demonstrate the highest impact? The conference will place emphasis on a set of proven interventions, both direct and indirect, including the innovative use of technology to address undernutrition.

— BUILDING LONG TERM COMMITMENT

The conference aims to strengthen political will and address the challenge of securing long-term sustainable financing, including through innovative mechanisms.

The **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AGAINST CHILD UNDERNUTRITION** will bring together a wide array of participants, including Government representatives, civil society organizations, academia, donors, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. It will foster dialogue between stakeholders, facilitating sharing of experiences and lessons learned to identify the most effective strategies.

Focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa, the conference will provide a unique opportunity for African leaders to share region-specific challenges and experiences and chart the way forward.

Organized in Paris, this conference constitutes a unique opportunity to engage France as well as other Member States of the European Union, especially given the upcoming G8 Summit and the discussion of the post-2015 development agenda.

Initiated by the French Committee for UNICEF, this conference is supported by major partners: the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Action contre la Faim (ACF), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). It will also benefit from inputs of other key stakeholders at global level and regional level in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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