

## G8 Briefing Note: Nutrition

### **Introduction**

The G8 has manifested its commitment to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through numerous initiatives in the last decade – addressing issues such as food security in 2009, and maternal and child health this year. The upcoming G8 Summit provides a unique opportunity for world leaders to expand and reaffirm this commitment by investing in what many call the “forgotten MDG” – **nutrition**, a key piece of the global health puzzle and the essential cornerstone to achieving most of the MDGs.

In 2008, *The Lancet's* series on maternal and child undernutrition catalyzed an unprecedented technical consensus around evidence-based actions to improve nutrition; and the technical consensus has generated collective action by a broad coalition of organizations to bring nutrition to the center stage of international development efforts. More than 80 organizations – developing country governments, CSOs, bilateral agencies, academia and UN and multilateral partners – have come together to create *Scaling Up Nutrition: A framework for action*, which outlines key considerations, principles and priorities for action and calls for support for increased investment in nutrition interventions that can be tailored to meet the unique needs of communities and nations.

### **Nutrition: An Investment that Pays for Itself**

There are three basic reasons for investing in good nutrition. First, it is the right thing to do – all children deserve the opportunity to grow up to be healthy and productive. Research studies have shown that there is a critical window of opportunity between early pregnancy and age two when nutrition has lifelong impacts on growth, brain development, educational achievement and the immune system that allows us to fight against diseases. Proper early nutrition is foundational, a major determinant in both short- and long-term health outcomes and the effects of malnutrition during this critical life stage are largely irreversible.

Second, addressing child malnutrition is an investment that pays for itself. Adequate nourishment at a young age reduces the burden and the high financial costs of diseases like tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS. It also contributes to a thriving workforce, as children who receive adequate nutrition are more likely to start school earlier, complete more of their education, and earn more as adults.

Third, proven, cost-effective solutions to improve child malnutrition are available for less than \$5 per child per year and can be tailored to local communities to dramatically reduce malnutrition and its devastating and permanent impacts on millions of infants and young children. These interventions focus on educating families about making the healthiest choices for young children, including support for breastfeeding as much as possible for the first six months of life, the introduction of nutritious solid foods with continued breastfeeding starting at six months through age two, and proper intake of essential vitamins and minerals for both children and their mothers.

### **Actionable Steps**

Achieving impact on child nutrition at a global level – both in the next five years to make progress toward achieving the MDGs, and in the long-term for true, systemic change – will require a broad, coordinated effort. The organizations supporting the *Scaling Up Nutrition* framework developed a comprehensive framework for global action to address nutrition-related issues, focusing on evidence-based interventions including:

- Promoting good nutritional practices, such as breastfeeding and improved hygiene;
- Increasing intake of vitamins and minerals for women and children through supplements and food fortification; and
- Therapeutic feeding for malnourished children.

This framework calls for country-owned strategies and multi-sectoral support for a specific range of evidence-based, cost-effective interventions in the 36 highest burden countries that account for 90 percent of undernutrition of children under five. It estimates the cost of these at full scale would be in the range of \$10 billion.

Thus, we have a global framework for action that represents technical consensus on the problem and the solution, an international movement with growing momentum to bring nutrition to the center stage of the international political economy, and we have the sure knowledge that most of the MDGs (especially MDGs 1, 4, 5 and 6) can be met only if major efforts are made to scale up nutrition. By supporting the global framework for action, the G8 can sustain this momentum and make measurable strides to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

“Scaling up Nutrition: A Framework for Action” can be downloaded from [worldbank.org/nutrition](http://worldbank.org/nutrition)

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