



Save the Children

NUTRITION BOOST

Why the world needs a step change in finance for nutrition – and how it can be achieved

Child malnutrition is endemic in many countries today. Its impact is devastating, destroying young lives and blighting futures:

- 155 million children are stunted¹ and 52 million are wasted.²
- Obesity in young children³ and anaemia in women of reproductive age⁴ are on the rise.
- Malnutrition remains an underlying cause in 45% of child deaths.⁵
- We currently significantly underestimate the financing requirements to turn this around and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2.
- The existing nutrition funding paradigm cannot deliver what is needed.
- We need a step change in financing the fight against malnutrition.

THE CHALLENGE

The scale of the challenge in tackling child malnutrition is undeniable. Millions of children are malnourished because of who they are and where they live. They are discriminated against due to their ethnic background, their disabilities, their family's low income, or after being forced from their homes.⁶

Nevertheless there are signs of hope. 193 countries have agreed to end malnutrition for all by 2030 – as set out in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, target 2.2.⁷ In recent years, we have seen positive developments in policy, funding and outcomes on child nutrition.

But despite these advances, progress is not anywhere near fast enough to achieve the SDG target to end child malnutrition for all. Much more needs to be done.

Fundamental here is a realistic appraisal of how we need to finance nutrition – and by how much. New calculations by Save the Children on nutrition finance, though rudimentary in design (see below), powerfully make the case that the resources required are far beyond the capabilities of the current funding paradigm.

The overarching message is clear and unequivocal: a step change in nutrition financing is urgently required.

FALLING SHORT

The World Bank Investment Framework is currently the dominant narrative on nutrition financing. But while it is a useful staging post, it significantly underestimates the funding that is needed. It indicates that an additional \$7 billion per year is required to achieve the World Health Assembly (WHA) targets and save 3.7 million lives by 2025.⁸ But the additional \$7 billion only accounts for four out of the six WHA targets⁹ and it excludes nutrition-sensitive interventions, which are assumed but not costed.

Furthermore, the WHA targets will only take us part of the way to achieving SDG2: for example, the target on wasting is for a reduction to less than 5% prevalence by 2025¹⁰ – rather than to eliminate it completely by 2030. Acceptance of the financial asks for the WHA targets therefore entails an implicit acceptance that SDG2 will not be achieved.

That is unacceptable. Reneging on the global commitment to ensure every child gets adequate nutrition cannot be an option. Leaders must be held to account for their pledge to end malnutrition for all. And they must put in place a model that can deliver on it.

There are immediate challenges. Nutrition is inherently multi-sectoral, covering maternal and child health, infant and young child feeding, social protection, agriculture, WASH and many more sectors. That makes calculating the financing needs for SDG2 extraordinarily difficult. Further, we do not have a clear idea of current global expenditure on nutrition, due to the opaqueness of aid tracking¹¹ and the reticence of some countries to publish their domestic nutrition budgets and disbursements on time.

New calculations from Save the Children conclude that, at a minimum, an additional \$23.25 billion is required per year to meet the challenge of SDG2¹² – more than three times the \$7 billion that the World Bank Investment Framework suggests. While we acknowledge that this figure is not precise – it uses rudimentary extrapolation and makes multiple assumptions – it demonstrates that, even with a significant margin for error, the resources required are far beyond the capabilities of the current funding paradigm.

A STEP CHANGE IN NUTRITION FINANCE

There are two elements to the step change that is needed in nutrition financing.

First, nutrition financing sources must be diversified. A significant uplift in **domestic resource mobilisation** (DRM) is essential, focused on the most basic needs, and driven by widening the revenue base through progressive tax reform.

Innovative financing must be brought to scale through expansion and reform of existing mechanisms, such as the Global Financing Facility and Power of Nutrition, and through the creation of an enabling environment for new mechanisms to emerge. Finally, **official development assistance** (ODA) is vital, but limited – it should be focused on the most excluded children, and on catalysing new domestic resources.

Second, diversified and increased financing for nutrition should abide by four pillars:

- **Supporting and funding national nutrition plans:** these plans are the key to delivering sustainable, country-driven change, and offer a costed, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder strategy that identifies where funding is needed in the local context and the size of the local funding gap.
- **Equity:** nutrition financing must prioritise the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda, acknowledging the financial and social implications of this principle¹³ and moving away from the uneven picture of achievement that characterised the Millennium Development Goals.¹⁴
- **Transparency and accountability:** all nutrition financing must be transparent and accountable, both domestically, through the timely release of allocations and disbursement, and globally, through the tracking of aid flows and pledges.
- **Bridging the humanitarian/development divide:** investment in flexible and shock-responsive nutrition development work needs to be allied with sustained post-humanitarian response funding to lock in developmental gains and mitigate against recurrence.

GENERATING RESOURCES: INCREASING FUNDING FOR NUTRITION

INCREASE DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILISATION

through progressive tax reform with resources focused on basic needs

SCALE-UP INNOVATIVE FINANCING

through the Global Financing Facility and Power of Nutrition, and through encouraging new mechanisms

IMPROVE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

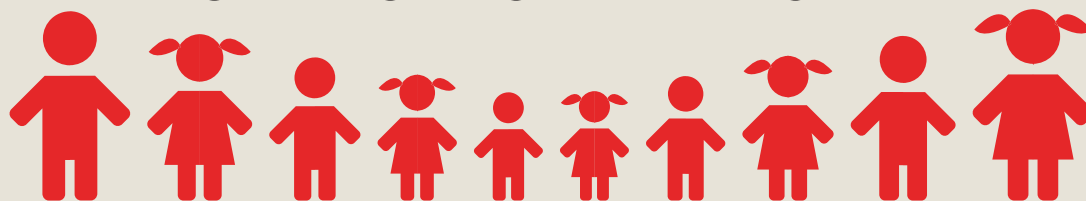
so that it focuses on the most excluded children and catalyses new domestic resources



NUTRITION

SPENDING RESOURCES: FOUR PRINCIPLES TO ENSURE NUTRITION RESOURCES ARE BETTER SPENT

NUTRITION FOR EVERY CHILD



SUPPORT AND FUND NATIONAL NUTRITION PLANS

that are costed, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder

EMBED EQUITY

by prioritising the Leave No One Behind agenda

BE TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

on domestic and global nutrition finance

BRIDGE THE DIVIDE

between humanitarian and development responses

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASE FINANCING FOR NUTRITION

- The existing funding paradigm is not capable of delivering the level of financing required. A new funding model is needed, based on the sustainable generation of increased domestic and innovative resources, which should be supported by, but not reliant upon, aid.
- DRM is the key to successful long-term nutrition funding and must be harnessed in a transformational way, through strengthening revenue collection mechanisms equitably and transparently, and clamping down on tax evasion, particularly illicit financial flows.
- ODA must be specifically targeted in two ways: for the benefit of the most excluded, and to build systems for the generation of sustainable domestic resources in the future.
- Innovative financing mechanisms for nutrition are vitally important but must ensure that they generate long-term, sustainable resources, drive funding towards national nutrition plans, embrace multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral involvement, and avoid adding unmanageably to debt burdens.
- It is vital that debt relief is provided where interest payments have become unsustainable.

ENSURE NUTRITION FUNDING IS BETTER SPENT

- All nutrition financing should be channelled into funding costed, equity-driven, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder national nutrition plans. Where

these plans do not exist, the priority should be to create them, with the assistance of the **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement**.

- Domestic budgets should prioritise essential social needs over all else.
- Nutrition funding must be spent on either funding proven interventions in accordance with national nutrition plans or researching new ones, while always prioritising the Leave No One Behind principle, transparency and accountability.

IMPROVE TRACKING OF NUTRITION SPENDING

The tracking of nutrition spending must improve:

- On an overarching level, new pledges to nutrition should be recorded in the Decade of Action on Nutrition's¹⁵ commitment repository, which should be expanded to include commitments from all sectors.
- On ODA, a new nutrition-sensitive policy marker should be introduced.
- On DRM, all countries should introduce nutrition-specific budget lines and indicate nutrition-sensitive spend across all related sectors. This should be tracked through independently delivered budget analysis. It will allow a comparison of the costed national nutrition plan with the total in-country disbursement, in order to establish the country-level funding gap.

ENDNOTES

¹ Development Initiatives (2017) *Global Nutrition Report*, p.10 https://www.globalnutritionreport.org/files/2017/11/Report_2017.pdf

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*, p.30

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ World Health Organisation (2017) Factsheet – *Children: Reducing Mortality*, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs178/en/> (accessed February 2018)

⁶ Save the Children (2016) *Unequal Portions: Ending malnutrition for every last child*, p.v http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Unequal_Portions.pdf

⁷ United Nations (2015), *Sustainable Development Goal 2, Target 2.2*, "By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons" <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>

⁸ World Bank Group (2017) *An Investment Framework for Nutrition*, p.3 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26069>

⁹ The WHA targets on stunting, wasting, anaemia and child overweight are included but obesity and low birth weight are not.

¹⁰ World Health Organization, *Global Targets 2025*, <http://www.who.int/nutrition/global-target-2025/en/>, accessed March 2018

¹¹ Action Against Hunger (2012) *Aid for Nutrition: Can investments to scale up nutrition be accurately tracked?*, p.34, http://www.actionagainsthunger.org/sites/default/files/publications/Aid_for_Nutrition_low_res_final.pdf

¹² Save the Children (2018) research with Mari Williams, external consultant.

¹³ International Institute for Environment and Development (2016) *Unpacking by what we mean by "leave no one behind"*, <https://www.iied.org/unpacking-what-we-mean-leave-no-one-behind>, accessed February 2018

¹⁴ N Kabeer (2010) *Can the MDGs Provide a Pathway to Social Justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities*, Institute for Development Studies, p.5, <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/MDGreportwebsiteu2WC.pdf>

¹⁵ The United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution 'Decade of Action on Nutrition', running from 2016 to 2025. Described as a leap forward in galvanising international action on nutrition, the resolution invites governments to actively support its implementation, including setting national nutrition targets for 2025.

Every child has the right to a future. Save the Children works in the UK and around the world to give children a healthy start in life, and the chance to learn and be safe. We do whatever it takes to get children the things they need – every day and in times of crisis.

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Save the Children
1 St John's Lane
London EC1M 4AR
UK
+44 (0)20 7012 6400

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