

## OWG3 Side Event: Nutrition in the Post-2015 Context, 23 May 2013

### Key Messages

**Nutrition is critical to overall human and economic development.**

**Nutrition is important throughout the life cycle.** Nutrition is different from other health issues – it isn't something we do every once in a while -- it is something we do daily. Nutrition is linked to food, and more importantly to nutrients.

**Nutrition goes beyond food security:** Nutrition goes beyond food security as it is linked to and depends on clean water and sanitation and health services but also on education (including good child care and hygiene practices) and good governance in terms of appropriate gender policies and social protection for the most vulnerable. Nutrition is linked to food security through food availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability. From the vantage point of food availability, it is about availability of nutritious foods, of nutrients, diet diversity, food processing and fortification and food wastage – most common among highly nutritious foods. Similarly, nutrition is linked to food access – economic access (affordability), physical access (markets), food price variability and issues related to gender. Utilisation includes consumption as well as how the body uses the nutrients it gets.

**Malnutrition is universal in its three dimensions: undernutrition** (measured for example by wasting and stunting), **micronutrient deficiencies** and **overweight/obesity**. Wasting (low weight-for-height) affects 52 million children and results from shocks or seasonal changes; it is linked both to illness and food shortages. More than 160 million children are stunted (have low height-for-age) and some 37 countries have stunting levels that are classified as critical by WHO. More than one billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. At the same time, overweight and obesity are increasing rapidly in both high- and low-income countries. Prevalence of overweight is high in countries with simultaneously high rates of undernutrition. Maternal overweight and obesity exceed that of underweight in all regions of the world.

**Timing is critical: nutrition is particularly important during the first 1,000 days** – from pregnancy through a child's two years of age. Physical growth and cognitive development are greatest during this period. Children are also often most susceptible to illness during this period. Stunting that occurs during the first 1,000 days is largely irreversible and has consequences on a child's psychomotor and cognitive capacity, thus depriving a child from reaching her full potential and from equal opportunities for the rest of her life. Consequently, it deprives the communities, societies, countries, and the world from its full human potential and has high economic cost. Food and nutrition interventions for pregnant and lactating women can positively impact birth outcomes, child survival and development.

**Importance of two-track approach:** There has been significant progress in undernutrition and we can and must build on what works. But many challenges remain. Malnutrition affects all of us and is universal in its three dimensions. Sustainable agriculture and diet diversity are the long-term solution to hunger. But during 1,000 days women and children need special attention. Young children need 40 nutrients daily and they need them now, not waiting while we deliberate the SDGs or while we solve the larger agriculture and food production systems issues. So we need to consider simultaneously short-term strategies, such as safety nets, and longer term strategies.

**MDG1- unequal progress in reducing hunger:** Progress has been made in reducing the burden of undernutrition since 2008, but the decline in prevalence has not been fast enough. The improvements have been slower in sub-Saharan Africa --this is where we need to focus most of the resources in the future. Some countries within Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) still suffer from high prevalence of undernutrition. Anaemia prevalence has not improved in Africa, Asia or LAC over the past 15 years.

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