

Harmonizing Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Across U.S. Government Agencies

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Bread for the World Institute provides policy analysis on hunger and strategies to end it. The Institute educates opinion leaders, policy makers and the public about hunger in the United States and abroad.

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Sonia Dominguez/USAID

Mayan mothers in the village of Acul, near Nebaj, Guatemala, learn to monitor their children's health, nutrition, and growth. USAID worked with the Guatemalan Ministry of Health to strengthen grassroots health awareness and focus resources on vulnerable groups.

Key Points

- Significant resources and political will are being mobilized for global nutrition. The new whole of U.S. government Nutrition Strategy being developed is an opportunity to unite departments and agencies behind a common nutrition goal.
- Under Feed the Future (FTF), the U.S. government is working to strengthen how evidence-based nutrition interventions are integrated into development projects working across sectors. Results and lessons learned from the first two years of FTF implementation need to be gathered, shared and applied across all relevant U.S. government funded programs.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework, operational and technical guidance as well as program tools for nutrition have been developed under FTF and the Global Health Initiative (GHI). These materials need to be harmonized and adapted for routine use by relevant departments and agencies.
- Sustained senior-level government commitment and increased in-house nutrition technical capacity in headquarters offices and the field will be key for the U.S. government to achieve its global nutrition objectives working across departments, agencies and initiatives.

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Abstract

Addressing the high burden of under-nutrition in developing countries through multisectoral, evidence-based approaches is increasingly recognised as a top global priority. 2013 resulted in the establishment of new global nutrition targets endorsed by governments and international stakeholders. The United States is a leading donor to nutrition efforts globally and is developing a new inter-agency Nutrition Strategy. Achieving global nutrition targets will demand that nutrition objectives and measures be more purposefully and consistently applied across all relevant U.S. government funded projects. Operational and technical guidance, as well as tools for integrating nutrition, exist that can be harmonized, adapted and applied. Internal nutrition technical capacity across government departments and agencies will need to be strengthened, at headquarters and in the field. Results from improved monitoring and evaluation will help show Congress that funding nutrition-related programs is a smart investment of appropriated funds. An evidence base of improved outcomes will help sustain political momentum, and will enable the United States to continue being a leader in improving global nutrition through its development assistance efforts.

Background

The global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement has brought nutrition to the forefront of the international development agenda, underscoring the need to directly incorporate nutrition objectives into the design and implementation of national plans, multisectoral policies, projects, and investments.¹ More published research, literature reviews, online networks, and discussion papers^{2,3,4,5,6,7} are emerging to better connect development practitioners with relevant research, policy, and program guidance on evidence-based strategies to improve nutrition outcomes. Areas where additional research is needed are also being identified⁸, and the USG has indicated that it will strengthen its nutrition research agenda within the context of its forthcoming Nutrition Strategy.

In June 2013, the high-level “Nutrition for Growth: Beating Hunger Through Business and Science” event in London brought together more than 100 nutrition stakeholders representing developing country governments, donor organizations, the United Nations, private foundations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, and the private sector. The event led to pledges of more than \$4.15 billion for nutrition-specific investments through 2020 and an additional \$19 billion for improving nutrition outcomes through nutrition-sensitive approaches over the same period. Immediately after the “Nutrition for Growth” event, Bread for the World and Concern Worldwide co-hosted a second high-level nutrition meeting in Washington, DC, on “Sustaining Political Commitments to Scale Up Nutrition.” During this meeting, more than 250 global nutrition stakeholders—including 25 representatives from SUN countries—came together to identify opportunities for civil society to amplify its voice and mobilize action to support nutrition plans and goals, especially at the country level.

Christopher Mweembe from Zimbabwe discusses nutrition with Mary Hodges, HKI, Sierra Leone.



Within the USG development agenda, nutrition has been an integral component of broader health, HIV/AIDS, water, sanitation, school feeding, food security, and food aid platforms since the mid-1970s. However, President Obama’s

2009⁹ launch of the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative (later named Feed the Future, FTF) marked the first time nutrition targets were made a top priority within a large, inter-agency development initiative. The GHI, also announced in 2009, similarly prioritized a top-level nutrition target and indicators. These were aligned with those of FTF for coordination purposes.¹⁰ The USG has been a firm supporter of the SUN Movement and committed more than \$10 billion for nutrition programming during the June 2013 “Nutrition for Growth” event.¹¹ To underscore the USG commitment to improving nutrition, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah also announced that he would spearhead a new whole-of-government Nutrition Strategy that will support the scale up effective nutrition interventions, programs, and systems in both humanitarian and development contexts.¹²

Making nutrition a top priority within FTF and GHI was significant for two reasons. First, it gave high-level direction to

Box 1 Definitions used by USAID to summarize the nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities funded across the US Government

Nutrition-specific interventions or programs address the immediate determinants of fetal and child nutrition and development—adequate food and nutrient intake, feeding, caregiving and parenting practices, and low burden of infectious diseases.

Examples:

- Adolescent and maternal health and nutrition;
- Maternal and child dietary or micronutrient supplementation or fortification;
- Promotion of optimum breastfeeding;
- Complementary feeding;
- Treatment of severe malnutrition;
- Nutrition in emergencies.

Nutrition-sensitive interventions or programs address the underlying determinants of fetal and child nutrition and development—food security; adequate caregiving resources at the maternal, household, and community levels; and access to health services and a safe and hygienic environment—and incorporate specific nutrition goals.

Nutrition-sensitive programs can serve as delivery platforms for nutrition-specific interventions, potentially increasing their scale, coverage and effectiveness.

Examples:

- Agriculture and food security;
- Early child development;
- Women’s empowerment;
- Social safety nets;
- Water, sanitation and hygiene.

both old and new FTF and GHI programs, calling on them to re-evaluate how nutrition results can best be achieved. Second, the new nutrition targets under FTF and GHI gave an incentive for USG project managers and their implementing partners to be more accountable for reporting on nutrition indicators and results. Over the first two to three years of implementation, some FTF and GHI projects have moved ahead to successfully integrate nutrition activities and indicators into both their work plans and their monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Many other projects however need to be challenged to incorporate nutrition more fully and effectively, which will in turn lead to improved nutrition outcomes.

This paper builds on the recommendations of the 2012 Bread for the World briefing paper “Strengthening and Sustaining the U.S. Government’s Capacity to Support Global Efforts to Scale Up Nutrition.”¹³ Specifically, it will discuss how the USG may further strengthen the effectiveness of, and accountability for, strategies of integrating nutrition activities into broader programs in agriculture, food security, health, HIV/AIDS, gender, food aid, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene). It will make recommendations as to how the newly harmonized monitoring and evaluation guidance for nutrition investments may be strategically developed—both under the new internal USAID Nutrition Strategy, and the whole-of-government strategy that will follow. Lastly, it will examine some of the technical capacity challenges already being considered under the Strategy.

“If we are serious about making progress to tackle under-nutrition we need to be serious about measuring that progress.”

– Shawn Baker, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, “Data for Delivery” abstract, 20th International Congress of Nutrition, Grenada, Spain, Sept 15-20, 2013.¹⁴

Unpacking the USG Funding Commitments for Nutrition

USG’s internal review of nutrition programming: As mentioned in the background section, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah committed US \$10 billion for nutrition programs between 2012 and 2014 at the “Nutrition for Growth” event in London. This amount included \$1 billion for nutrition-specific interventions and nearly \$9 billion for nutrition-sensitive activities over fiscal years 2012-2014. These USG investments are supporting and accelerating efforts to reduce child stunting by 20 percent over five years, translating into 2 million fewer stunted children, and in support of the new World Health Assembly goal to reduce child stunting by 40% by 2025.¹⁵ In the lead-up to the Nutrition for Growth event, a



During Child Health Week in Zambia, community health volunteers weigh children under the watchful eyes of their mothers.

range of departments, agencies, and across government were asked to report on their respective nutrition interventions using common definitions and examples of nutrition-specific and nutrition sensitive approaches. USAID’s definitions and examples were adapted from those of the SUN Movement and the 2008 and 2013 Lancet Series on Child and Maternal Undernutrition (see Box 1). USAID is currently working with the SUN Movement to develop a revised set of definitions for both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities across donors. Future USG spending levels associated with these revised definitions will be released in early 2014.

The disaggregation of USG funding into nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities in advance of the Nutrition for Growth event was important because it paved the way, within the context of the development of the new whole-of-government Nutrition Strategy, for an internal review of how each program office currently reports on nutrition indicators (if any). Also discussed was how to further strengthen nutrition monitoring and evaluation within these two categories of nutrition programming. The USG has already taken several steps to improve nutrition monitoring and evaluation under both FTF and GHI, and it is also working to strengthen the integration of nutrition into its HIV/AIDS, food aid, school feeding and WASH programs.¹⁶

USG and global efforts to harmonize donor reporting on nutrition: USAID is currently working with other USG departments and agencies, as well as with the Donor Network of the global SUN Movement, to reach consensus on definitions of

nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches. This consensus on definitions can facilitate reporting into the new “Nutrition for Growth” and World Health Assembly monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Externally, the USG and its donor partners are working with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors to strengthen the integrity of donor reporting more broadly, including on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive funding. Many of the challenges faced in reaching a harmonized definition of nutrition-sensitive approaches, as well as recommendations for overcoming them, are discussed in detail in Bread for the World Institute’s Briefing Paper 20, “Implementing Nutrition-Sensitive Development: Reaching Consensus.”¹⁷ To facilitate internal reporting, the USG has already brought together the key departments and agencies involved in nutrition under the FTF initiative to agree on a common global monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as a list of 57 nutrition indicators. This was an important step however it has not yet fully translated into all appropriate department and agency-funded projects appropriately integrating nutrition targets and indicators into individual programs and projects.

Nutrition Budgeting and Technical Guidance

Nutritional goals must be explicitly incorporated into the design and implementation of agricultural and rural development projects and policies.

- Secure Nutrition Website, 2013

Nutrition budgeting guidance: Currently, most, but not all, of USAID’s nutrition spending is funded under the nutrition element of the global health budget. According to USAID, a new agriculture “nutrition-sensitive” budget sub-element has also been created for fiscal year 2014. Having these budget elements and sub-elements in place will help with internal tracking of nutrition investments across USAID’s health, WASH, HIV/AIDS, food security, food aid, education and agriculture program. Beyond USAID however, a lot of work lies ahead to still encourage other departments and agencies to allocate limited budget resources for nutrition interventions, and associated monitoring and evaluation.

Technical guidance: Over the past six to eight years, nutrition guidance on various topics has been developed and issued separately for FTF, GHI, PEPFAR, and USG-

funded school feeding and food aid programs. Thus far, the recommendations for USDA- and USAID-funded food aid programs as well as for PEPFAR have focused mainly on improving the targeting of food aid to young children and pregnant women. They have not yet provided comprehensive guidance or specific recommendations to strengthen the integration of multiple nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches into general programs, or to improve nutrition-related monitoring and evaluation.

Revised nutrition guidance for USAID Title II, USDA-funded food aid and school feeding programs were issued in 2012, but as yet, no specific technical or budget guidance for food aid projects to include and report on nutrition activities has been released.¹⁸ There is no operational or technical guidance specific to nutrition programming or monitoring and evaluation in the USDA Food Assistance Program Implementation Guidebook.¹⁹

PEPFAR has developed technical and budget guidance for USG country missions on nutrition, including guidance to allocate 3 percent of their annual budgets to nutrition and food security activities.²⁰ This budgeting guidance has greatly facilitated the scaling up and roll-out of the Nutrition Assessment and Counseling Support (NACS) approach and of other PEPFAR programs aimed at providing food assistance, improving treatment for acute malnutrition, and strengthening activities designed to help households generate income. Additional guidance is still needed, however, to further strengthen nutrition indicator reporting requirements under PEPFAR (see Box 2).

Recognizing the shortfalls with the nutrition guidance currently provided by separate USG departments, agencies

Box 2 Addressing gaps in nutrition reporting guidance for HIV/AIDS and Food Aid Programs

The Nutrition Assessment and Counseling Support (NACS) Approach was developed with PEPFAR resources and is currently being rolled out globally. NACS is an excellent platform for delivering nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions to reduce cases of acute malnutrition, promote exclusive breastfeeding, and improve appropriate complementary feeding—via both facility and community-based HIV/AIDS services. However, PEPFAR implementing partners are only required to report on the nutrition services provided each year to two categories of people—adults, and children under 18. This means that important data on nutrition services being provided with USG funding for children younger than 2 and for children younger than 5 in some projects is not being captured and reported on.

and bureaus, the task force developing the new Nutrition Strategy can build off of the existing FTF and PEPFAR technical guidance as well as the latest evidence from the 2013 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition and other publications, to put forward a new, harmonized guidance for use across the USG.

USG Nutrition Targets and Indicators

FTF and GHI Experience: FTF and the GHI truly laid the groundwork for the inclusion of impact level nutrition targets in large, high-priority USG development initiatives. The FTF Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance Series launched in 2011, which includes the Handbook of Indicator Definitions,²¹ provided well-researched definitions of mandatory and non-mandatory nutrition indicators. As a presidential, whole-of-government initiative, each department and agency is responsible for reporting on the FTF goals and indicators as appropriate according to their work areas and mandates.

During the first three years of FTF implementation, the USG has already learned some important lessons about annual reporting on nutrition indicators.²² First, implementing partners must include appropriate nutrition indicators in their monitoring and evaluation plans from the start—if not, their results will not be captured by annual country project performance reports and broader global reporting. For example, some FTF value chain and horticulture projects include nutrition education-related activities, but implementing partners do not have nutrition indicators in their project monitoring and evaluation plans because they are not “nutrition projects” per se. As a result, the results achieved through many nutrition interventions delivered within agriculture programs is not being captured. While the overall impact of the FTF initiative on nutrition is being measured through the baseline, midterm, and endline surveys, annual project-specific reporting on nutrition is also important to track and measure progress and expand the evidence base.

Second, because it is not until years later that the impact of some nutrition interventions—particularly nutrition-sensitive activities—can be measured, implementing partners may need additional guidance on how to use combinations of standard indicators, custom and/or proxy indicators to more accurately report on annual progress (for example, beyond just the number of children reached or the number of health workers trained). Other

methods, such as case studies and citizen feedback loops may also present opportunities for demonstrating impact at the community-level.

A third lesson is that not all FTF implementing partners are aware of the evidence base for incorporating both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions (and their related indicators and targets) into their projects. Additional guidance is urgently needed to help USG-funded implementing partners understand why and how to incorporate a combination of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches from the project design and request for applications (RFA) phase, all the way through to project implementation.

Bearing these and other lessons in mind, the USG task group developing the new Nutrition Strategy and harmonized guidance will need to: (i) review the strengths and weaknesses of the indicators currently in the FTF Handbook of Indicator Definitions and determine whether other additional indicators should be included²⁴; and (ii) work with USAID missions and other USG program offices working in relevant project areas to ensure that appropriate nutrition indicators are included in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plans of projects from their start, and that the indicators selected are able to provide a good annual picture of what the USG is financing in a given country. The USG should develop its indicators in close cooperation with relevant international organizations and national governments to ensure that new harmonized USG indicators are consistent, thus making data collection and analysis easier and more comparable across donor funded projects. Beyond FTF and GHI, important work also remains to continue to incorporate nutrition targets and indicators into new and ongoing food aid, school feeding, health, HIV/AIDS, WASH and food security initiatives.

Table 1 Nutrition targets and indicators included in USG initiatives²⁵

| Initiative or Program | Number of Nutrition Targets | Number of Nutrition Indicators |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Feed the Future | 3 | 17 |
| Global Health initiative | 3 | 17 |
| PEPFAR | 5 | 5 |
| President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) | 2 | 2 |
| Title II Food Aid | 0 | 0 |
| USDA Food Assistance | 0 | 0 |
| Millennium Challenge Corporation | 0 | 0 |
| Global Agriculture and Food Security (GAFSP) | 0 | 0 |



Jane Sebbi from Uganda prepares to plant beans, which will provide better nutrition and increased income for her family.

FTF Success Stories: What is working so far and what can be shared and learned?

Virtual networks and technical support mechanisms

Given the growing interest of developing countries and the broader global community in better understanding the linkages among agriculture, food security, nutrition, and health, the USG and other donors have recently begun to increase their support for virtual networks and technical support mechanisms to better enable the sharing of best practices (see annex 2). USAID staff and both FTF and GHI implementing partners are increasingly using online networks such as Agrilinks and Secure Nutrition,²⁶ to share experiences, evidence-based approaches, and lessons learned during project implementation. New USAID-funded Agriculture/Nutrition Global Learning and Evidence Exchanges carried out for the first time in 2013 also helped to bring together USAID agricultural and nutrition staff, host governments, implementing partners and experts to share knowledge and experience in integrating nutrition effectively into agricultural programs. Learning exchanges of this nature should continue to be expanded in 2014 and beyond. Missions are also accessing support through USAID's centrally-funded technical support mechanisms such as the Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING)²⁷ and the Food and Nutrition Technical Assis-

tance Program (FANTA III). However, more work is needed to reach out to, train and provide ongoing support to broader USG program staff who do not work directly on nutrition, so that they too can better understand how to incorporate and apply nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches into their programming. Within the context of the new USG Nutrition Strategy, capacity limitations and training needs across departments, agencies and offices must be considered and addressed as a complement to updated, harmonized operational and technical guidance that is shared with USG staff. A stock-taking of existing nutrition expertise across departments, offices, and missions could be conducted to gain a better understanding of current capacity and needs.

Connecting nutrition and infrastructure investments for more sustainable results

In the Republic of Indonesia, the USG Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is supporting a five-year, \$600 million compact designed to reduce poverty through economic growth.^{28*} This program illustrates how economic growth investments can be paired with nutrition-specific investments to achieve results. Indonesia's MCC compact includes three projects designed to increase household income in targeted regions through increased productivity, reduced energy costs, and improved provision of goods and services that enhance public sector growth. Out of the total compact, \$131.5 million is being used specifically to reduce and prevent low birth weight, childhood stunting, and child malnutrition, recognizing that successes in infrastructure investments in the project areas may be contingent on improving nutrition outcomes and the productivity of vulnerable populations. The MCC project targets approximately 7,000 villages in provinces where rates of stunting and low birth weight in infants and children up to 2 years old are higher than the national averages. Drawing on a growing body of international evidence on interventions to reduce stunting and low birth weight, the project uses an incentives-based scheme to increase demand for tools to reduce stunting, while also improving the health sector's capacities to respond to this increased demand. By including stunting as a high level target, and other nutrition-related indicators as part of its monitoring and evaluation framework, MCC Indonesia is leading the way for other USG-funded economic growth programs to measure for nutritional impact as well, rather than only assuming that nutrition outcomes will improve de facto as part of broader infrastructure and economic growth investments.

* <http://www.mcc.gov/pages/countries/program/indonesia-compact>

Changing perceptions about who “does” nutrition

In general terms, when it comes to nutrition-specific approaches, most program managers working in agriculture, water and sanitation, or HIV/AIDS see nutrition education as the “work” of other stakeholders—those who interact more directly with health workers, mothers, and children under 5. Attitudes are changing, but the concept of educating farmer groups, teachers, HIV/AIDS home-based care groups, or small savings and loans providers on basic nutrition is still often seen as “extra work” that may be only indirectly relevant to project activities.

The FTF program in Tanzania, however, has shown how management leadership on nutrition can create a filter-down effect to encourage nutrition integration across different sectors and programs. In 2010, USAID Tanzania decided to shift management responsibility for the nutrition portfolio from the Health Office to the Economic Growth Office. The impact of this decision was fourfold: i) a new mission nutrition strategy for FTF and GHI was developed; ii) a large new multi-sector nutrition project was created based on evidence-based nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions; iii) additional USAID “agriculture” funding was allocated for nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities within the missions’ FTF agriculture, horticulture, and food processing projects; and iv) mission management ensured that nutrition activities that had been previously funded under the Health Office (e.g., vitamin A supplementation and treatment for iron deficiency) were maintained. A lot of work remains to continue to integrate both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities into both the agriculture and health portfolios in Tanzania, but shifting the nutrition lead to the Economic Growth Office created an opportunity to stimulate change and help ensure that both FTF and GHI projects view nutrition as a multi-sectoral issue.

Learning from other projects

Despite a number of studies demonstrating the importance of integrating nutrition into agricultural and livelihoods programming, there are surprisingly few real world examples of how to do so effectively and at the scale needed. Literature reviews published over the past decade have provided valuable information about the specific agriculture interventions that can have the most impact on reducing under-nutrition,^{29,30} but few papers have documented the successes and failures of larger-scale development programs in this area.

One FTF program that has been highlighted recently is the Yaajeende project in Senegal, which has led to a 22 percent increase in the number of children who consume a “minimum acceptable diet” in the most food-insecure regions of the country since 2010.³¹ Within the FTF Indi-

cator Handbook, minimum acceptable diet is a good standard outcome indicator used by many projects to measure both the minimum feeding frequency and minimum dietary diversity, as appropriate for children aged 6-23 months. The Yaajeende project emphasizes integrating nutrition into agriculture in various sectors—from household level to senior government officials and private sector bodies. After three years of implementation, the Yaajeende project is being showcased by USAID through online networks and webinars as an example for other agriculture-led nutrition programs to learn from globally.

Specifically, the project has highlighted the importance of[^]:

- Integrating research into the project design
- Linking with national institutions to increase efficacy
- Partnering with government and NGO stakeholders from across different sectors and applying evidence-based nutrition approaches
- Supporting agriculture programs in incorporating horticulture activities to boost nutritional outcomes
- Supporting a nutrition governance structure that builds resilience
- Supporting the roles of agriculture and horticulture producer organizations, co-operatives, and local private
- Ensuring that women play leading roles in all four pillars of food security (food access, availability, food quality, and stability)

The results and lessons learned from the Yaajeende project, as well as from other similar, evidence based, USAID-funded nutrition programs, need to be shared widely with USG staff and their implementing partners developing or already working on other nutrition-related programs and projects. The Agrilinks and SPRING websites and their related webinar events are serving to reach broader audiences beyond only nutritionists, but the new nutrition strategy must reinforce the importance sharing and applying lessons learned across all USG funded projects. Similar recommendations to those noted by the Yaajeende project—and others on how to integrate nutrition into agriculture programs—are included also in a recent World Bank nutrition paper, “Prioritizing Nutrition in Agriculture and Rural Development: Guiding Principles for Operational Investments.”³²

[^]Additional details about the Yaajeende nutrition project can be found on the SPRING-Nutrition website (http://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/SPRING_Ag_Nut_Webinar_Series_Yaajeende_.pdf)



Harmonizing nutrition monitoring and evaluation guidance: opportunities and challenges

Although FTF is a whole-of-government initiative with a monitoring and evaluation framework for use by all relevant departments and agencies, more work still lies ahead to guide and support mission directors, office managers and other staff to really integrate nutrition approaches into their projects.

Measuring additional indicators and reporting on nutrition results will inevitably require additional financial and human resources, and some USG program offices may argue that they do not have the capacity to carry out the additional nutrition-related approaches that are to be recommended. The new Nutrition Strategy will therefore need to include space for each department, agency, and bureau responsible for reporting on nutrition results to identify and address their respective human resource capacity needs.

A further challenge for the task group developing the Nutrition Strategy will be to identify how global, country, or regional-level data sources, such as Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys (HCES) or other national surveys, can be used to streamline data collection efforts and reduce monitoring and evaluation costs across projects. Partnerships with local government and civil society organizations (CSOs) could be leveraged to help with data collection and ensure the long-term sustainability of monitoring, evaluation, and feedback systems. New USG nutrition guidance could also encourage stakeholder mapping and require greater collaboration among USG-funded implementing partners (including local CSOs) working in the same geographic area—e.g., sharing nutrition data sources and undertaking joint work planning and reporting on the nutrition services being provided.

Another important opportunity for strengthening whole-of-USG reporting on nutrition is to ensure that program offices and implementing partners have the technical support they need to incorporate nutrition issues throughout a project: from the proposal-writing stage through to the development of work plans, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and plans. Many USAID procurements and Indefinite Quantity Contracts (IQCs) that were developed in the early stages of FTF did not lay request applicants (and later USAID implementing partners) to include nutrition-sensitive approaches and indicators within their proposals and projects and as a result, it has been difficult to retrofit nutrition into these projects even where there is interest. To address this challenge all USG departments, agencies, and offices that are developing requests for applications, IQCs or other mechanisms for soliciting proposals should include a requirement for applicants to demonstrate how they will integrate nutrition approaches and how they will measure their results.

Within the context of the new USG Nutrition Strategy, it is also important to address a gap in knowledge: many implementing partners and monitoring and evaluation contractors—particularly those working outside the health sector—do not have significant experience in measuring nutrition indicators or developing proposals with nutrition-sensitive approaches incorporated. It will be helpful therefore for USG leadership to connect program managers and their implementing partners with one or more of the technical support mechanisms and nutrition networks discussed earlier. Currently, SPRING and FANTA III are designed for use by PEPFAR and USAID-funded projects at field level, but efforts could be made to develop similar technical support mechanisms that could support other USG country programs as well.

Looking forward

Easing the high burden of undernutrition in developing countries through smart, integrated nutrition projects and programs—programs that address both the immediate and the underlying causes of poor nutrition—must remain a high-level priority for the USG. Political commitments must yield improved programming strategies and approaches that can quickly become operational. It will be difficult to meet global nutrition targets unless nutrition objectives and indicators are more purposefully and consistently included in USG-funded health, agriculture, food aid, WASH, school feeding, gender, and food security programs. Cooperation and collaboration with developing country partners, other donors, UN agencies, NGOs, and local CSOs to strengthen monitoring and evaluation capacity and build the nutrition “evidence base” will be essential to leveraging and sustaining the current high level of political commitments. Although USG

funding for development assistance is less than 1 percent of the federal budget, a well-defined and consistently applied system of outcome measures is more important than ever. The government—across departments, bureaus, and offices—and its program implementing partners must generate and utilize solid nutrition monitoring and evaluation results. With these in hand, advocacy organizations and the affected agencies themselves will be better prepared to engage with members of Congress and explain why continuing to fund nutrition-related policies and programs is a smart investment, one that will sustain the political momentum we have gained and enable the United States to continue to play a leadership role in global nutrition efforts.

The following suggestions are offered for consideration as the new whole-of-government Nutrition Strategy is devised:

1. Within the new Nutrition Strategy, develop harmonized nutrition monitoring and evaluation guidance for use by all USG departments, agencies, and program offices in integrating evidence-based nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions into and across their global work in:
 - Agriculture and livelihood
 - Health
 - Food security and food aid
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Education and school feeding
 - Gender
 - WASH
 - Safety net
2. Building on existing nutrition monitoring and evaluation guidance developed for FTF and GHI, bring offices together to agree on common nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive indicators that can be used by all USG departments, agencies, and initiatives.
3. Include a priority human resource development agenda within the new USG Nutrition Strategy that will:
 - Ensure senior-level nutrition leadership and accountability within each of the departments, agencies, and program offices responsible for reporting on nutrition results—both at headquarters and at the country project implementation level.
 - Require and enable all relevant offices to take stock of their technical needs in relation to nutrition, and to gain access to the necessary internal and/or external technical support at the headquarter, USG country office, and implementing partner levels as appropriate.
4. Connect centrally-funded USG technical assistance mechanisms (e.g., SPRING, FANTA III) with USG staff and their implementing partners at the country level so

that they can be better supported to integrate nutrition approaches into their programs. Given that SPRING and FANTA III are only designed to accept field support funding from USAID missions, new mechanisms should be developed to provide similar support for other USG departments and agencies.

5. Leverage new and existing virtual networks to enable better sharing of technical information and best practices in monitoring and evaluation across departments, agencies, program offices, and implementing partners. The networks need to be as practical and easy to use as possible so that project managers and implementing partners see their value and want to use them regularly.
6. Ensure that all new project solicitation requests (RFPs, IQCs, etc) developed by relevant USG offices include specific requirements for incorporating and measuring the impact of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions where possible, and that relevant projects incorporate nutrition targets and indicators within their monitoring and evaluation frameworks from the start.
7. Encourage funding of “learning-by-doing” projects that will help strengthen the evidence base for nutrition-sensitive programming both within the U.S. government and globally.
8. Work to strengthen the capacity of governments and civil society partners to sustain local programs, particularly their routine monitoring and evaluation efforts, beyond the USG-funded project cycle; build internal resiliency; and strengthen feed-back loops between, national governments, CSOs and USG partners.

As the USG high-level focal point for nutrition, the USAID Administrator and agency staff are working to respond to the many mandates, expectations, and nutrition capacity challenges facing the entire spectrum of departments, agencies, and program offices involved in nutrition programming. This valuable high-level attention to nutrition within USAID sets an example of how leadership and senior nutrition champions can support action to improve nutrition outcomes across the USG and can also further leverage support from other donors, CSOs, and national governments. USAID Administrator Shah and other nutrition champions within the USG will need to continue to encourage and support managers, programming staff, and implementing partners throughout the roll-out of the new Nutrition Strategy. Harmonized reporting requirements and agreement on common nutrition targets and measures for use across all USG offices will build an evidence base of nutrition outcomes that can be shared, as all partners work together toward achieving the new World Health Assembly goals and ending hunger and malnutrition within our lifetimes.



Annex Nutrition Resource Networks*

| Network | Objective | Website | Host |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| AgriLinks | Achieving agriculture-led food security through knowledge sharing | www.agrilinks.org | USAID/Bureau for Food Security |
| | Agriculture-Nutrition Community of Practice | https://knowledge-gateway.org/ag2nut/ | Knowledge Gateway |
| AgN-GLEE | Agriculture and Nutrition Global Learning and Evidence Exchange | | |
| FSN | The Food Security and Nutrition Network | http://www.fsnnetwork.org/ | USAID/TOPS |
| GF FSN | Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition | http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/ | FAO |
| NALAN | Nutrition and Agriculture Linkages in Africa Network | http://www.fsnnetwork.org/task-force/nutrition-and-agriculture-linkages-africa-network-nalanw.fsn-network.org | USAID/TOPS FSN Network |
| Secure Nutrition | Aims to bridge knowledge gaps between agriculture, food security, and nutrition. | www.securenutritionplatform.org | World Bank |
| SPRING | Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovation for Nutrition Globally | www.spring-nutrition.org | |
| AllNet | USAID AllNet Agriculture-Nutrition Community | https://portal.usaidallnet.gov | USAID |
| SUN | Scaling Up Nutrition | www.scalingupnutrition.org | |
| | Transform Nutrition | www.transformnutrition.org | UKaid |
| WHO | Guidelines in nutrition | www.who.int/publications/guidelines/nutrition/en/ | WHO |
| WHO | e-Library of evidence | www.who.int/elena/en/ | WHO |
| Famine Early Warning System Network | | http://www.fews.net/ | |

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