The Earth’s population is expected to increase from approximately 7 billion to 9.2 billion by 2050, and aside from anything else, this will require a great effort to meet the nutritional demand of a significant population influx. However, the world is severely lagging behind in meeting any of the 2025 Global Nutrition Targets set by the World Health Assembly. In response, global attention has turned towards addressing today’s major nutrition challenges, with academics, policy makers and international organisations developing key priorities for action.

### WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

**GLOBAL NUTRITION TARGETS 2025**

In 2012, the World Health Assembly (WHA) endorsed the *Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition*. Highlighting priority areas for action in worldwide malnutrition and designed to act as a catalyst for change, the plan set out six global nutrition targets to achieve by 2025:

1. **40% global reduction in the number of stunted children under five**
   - Stunting leads to reduced cognitive and physical development, as well as the increased likelihood of developing degenerative diseases including diabetes
   - Projections suggest that in 2025, 128 million children will be stunted, which exceeds the set target of 100 million

2. **Reduce anaemia in women of reproductive age by 50%**
   - Anaemia causes fatigue, impairs health and quality of life, and increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature and low birth weight
   - Currently it affects 29.4% of women of reproductive age, falling below the 2025 target of 14.7%

3. **30% decrease in low birth weight**
   - Low birth weight is the most common cause of newborn death
   - Remaining relatively unchanged, substantial progress is required to reach the 2025 target

4. **No rise in the number of children who are overweight**
   - Being overweight in childhood increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, asthma, sleep disorders, noncommunicable diseases, and premature death and disability in adult life
   - Between 2000-13, the number of overweight children across the globe rose from 32 million to 42 million

5. **Exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months to increase by at least 50%**
   - Provides ideal nutrition, boosts immunity, and protects children against diarrhoeal disease, respiratory infections and other diseases, while also decreasing the likelihood of obesity and type 2 diabetes in adulthood
   - Worldwide, only 40% of infants are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life

6. **Reduce and maintain childhood wasting to below 5%**
   - Severe wasting accounts for approximately 2 million deaths per year across the globe, with mortality rates 11 times higher among severely wasted children
   - In order to meet the 2025 target, wasting rates will need to drop by around half
STRATEGIES

Since the approval of the Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition, a diverse array of national, regional and international efforts have been launched in a bid to end malnutrition in all its many guises. Here, International Innovation highlights some of the key strategies being put to the test across the world.

USAID MULTI-SECTORAL NUTRITION STRATEGY 2014-2025

Aligned with WHA’s Global Nutrition Targets 2025, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID – see page 72) is taking a collaborative approach to address the causes of malnutrition – the USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025. This strategy aims to:

• Scale-up effective, integrated nutrition-specific and -sensitive interventions, programmes, and systems across humanitarian and development contexts
• Reduce chronic malnutrition by 20 per cent through the Feed the Future and the Global Health Initiative
• Decrease the current figure of stunted children by at least 2 million
• Ensure global acute malnutrition does not exceed the emergency threshold of 15 per cent
• Improve nutrition to save lives, build resilience, grow economic productivity and further development
• Focus on the 1,000 day window from pregnancy to a child’s second birthday

FEED THE FUTURE

The G8 Summit in 2009 laid the foundations for Feed the Future (FTF), an initiative established by the US Government to support country-driven approaches to end hunger and poverty. In 2013, FTF helped more than 12.5 million children through nutrition interventions, as well as nearly 7 million farmers and food producers to use new technology and management practices on over 4 million hectares of land.

Key focus areas:
• Inclusive agriculture sector growth
• Gender integration
• Improved nutrition
• Private sector engagement
• Research and capacity building
• Climate-smart development

SCALING UP NUTRITION

The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement was established in 2010 to improve nutrition through a united effort to:

ENGAGE governments, civil society, UN, donors, businesses and scientists

INSPIRE these groups to discover new ways to work collectively

INVEST in key areas of action

There are now 54 countries committed to SUN each with national development programmes focused on the implementation of specific actions for nutrition and nutrition-sensitive strategies:

Specific actions for nutrition:
• Feeding practices and behaviours
• Fortification of foods
• Micronutrient supplementation
• Treatment of severe malnutrition

Nutrition-sensitive strategies:
• Agriculture
• Clean water and sanitation
• Education and employment
• Healthcare
• Support for resilience
• Women’s empowerment
Global Nutrition Report 2014

The Global Nutrition Report was launched for the first time last year as a direct consequence of a meeting of governments, civil society organisations, donors, UN agencies and businesses at the Nutrition for Growth Summit in London, UK, in 2013. The inaugural report provided unique global and country profiles on nutrition, which spanned all 193 UN member states, and brings together a huge array of data on nutrition to enable the effective identification of progress, bottlenecks and opportunities for action as well as how to strengthen accountability in nutrition; crucial to advancing the progress in reducing malnutrition.

“Ending malnutrition throughout the world requires action on many fronts. The health sector cannot do it alone. But political commitment is growing. More and more countries know what they need to do to ensure access to healthy diets for all. This report will help us track progress toward global nutrition targets and understand where greater investments are needed.”

Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization

“The report offers a much-needed platform for tracking progress on nutrition. Its emphasis on productive partnerships to accelerate improvements is especially relevant as the international community commits to action at the Second International Conference on Nutrition. Our generation has all the conditions to respond to the Zero Hunger Challenge and make all forms of malnutrition a relic of the past.”

José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

“The Global Nutrition Report demonstrates with data and with examples what we all know: improved nutritional status is essential for sustainable development. We are all responsible for ensuring that actions and investments truly respond to the realities of those for whom the multiple burdens of malnutrition are not an abstract concept, but an everyday reality. Access to timely and reliable data empowers decision makers to make the most efficient use of resources and is key to ensuring that all stakeholders’ commitments are honoured and sustained.”

David Nabarro, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Food Security and Nutrition

The Global Nutrition Report (GNR) 2014 was the first of its kind and the centrepiece of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in November 2014. Could you briefly summarise the GNR and its significant findings?

The GNR provides a concise and fresh picture of the status of global nutrition. It illustrates how all countries are affected by some or, more often, multiple forms of malnutrition, but also highlights success stories of rapid improvements in nutrition indicators. Substantial action has been taken by countries to address nutrition across all sectors, and commitments made in several international fora are now bringing significant new resources.

What triggered the production of the Report?

The Report was prompted by the request of the World Health Assembly (WHA) to periodically chart the achievements of the Global Nutrition Targets, and by the Global Nutrition for Growth Compact to report on the implementation of commitments. Previously, the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) had been producing reports on the world nutrition situation. However, GNR has more information on the actions taken and the investments made.

I was deeply involved in the production of GNR. I discussed the idea with a core group of stakeholders, contributed to developing the process, discussed the outline, provided the data and reviewed the text.

You presented World Health Organization (WHO) policy briefs and the nutrition target tracking tool at the Key Findings of the Global Nutrition Report 2014, on Wednesday 28 January in Geneva, Switzerland. Can you provide an overview of your presentation and the key take home messages you wished to convey?

The world is off track to reach the WHA targets, which are ambitious but realistic. We have a great deal of experience on how to achieve the targets and WHO has summarised it in concise policy briefs, including suggested nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive policies and programmes. ICN2 has mobilised over 170 countries that have committed to achieve the global targets. There is an expectation that a Decade of Action on Nutrition for 2016-25 will be established to implement recommended actions in agriculture, trade, health, social protection, education, water and sanitation, and food safety. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals do not have a strong nutrition component. We would like to see indicators for all six targets, together with an indicator on dietary diversity and an indicator on investments.

Can you discuss the value of the GNR as a means towards improving nutrition worldwide?

The Report is an important advocacy tool to reach all relevant actors. Sustained action and investment requires that policy makers are aware of the goal and rationale for their action.

In your view, what are the major challenges still facing the improvement of nutrition?

We need to have a comprehensive approach to nutrition challenges and implement policies and programmes that simultaneously address all forms of malnutrition. There also must be clarity about the priority actions, the commitments made and their timeframe. Accountability helps consolidate the roadmap and pushes for its implementation.

In addition, we need to improve the food supply and match it with the needs of all sectors of the population, considering the nutritional impact of agricultural and trade policies. We must deliver effective nutrition interventions through the health sector, implement social welfare policies that promote nutrition, and provide adequate water and sanitation to all. Currently, economic drivers and inefficiencies in the social protection and health systems lead to a nutritionally inadequate food system and to a failure to reach all vulnerable people.