

#### [4] PROGRAMMES DEPEND ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Communities should not be seen merely as beneficiaries of aid, but as partners to be consulted when planning which services are needed and how they should be delivered. Involving the community helps make them aware of the resources they have to offer and gives them ownership of the programmes.
- Draw on local practices and values. Entering into dialogue with community members sheds light on their food and flavour preferences. Incorporating this knowledge into programmes will help enhance acceptance of them from within communities.
- Do not be afraid to create partnerships with non-conventional groupings. Faith-based organizations, traditional healers, youth and women's groups: these are all potential entry points for promoting healthy growth.

#### [5] GET THE MESSAGE OUT THROUGH EVERY AVAILABLE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

- Consider what information you want to get across in your messages.
- Promote small, memorable actions relevant to local causes of stunting. These messages should centre on positive feeding practices, but may also incorporate hygiene and sanitation, tips for caregiving, and how to make sure children are given opportunities for play and learning.
- Do not underestimate the power of word-of-mouth for spreading messages about nutrition. Doctors, primary health care staff, community health workers and school teachers should capitalise on their contact with mothers for passing on recommendations.
- Mass media has mass potential for communicating health messages. Radios and mobile phones are inexpensive, so messages sent through these channels have a huge reach.

#### [6] DO NOT FORGET TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE PROGRAMME

- Before starting the programme, set goals and targets to track how effectively it is being implemented.
- Regular monitoring can provide valuable information for decision-making and allow adjustments to be made accordingly. The data it provides may identify areas that have been overlooked.
- Evaluations provide an opportunity for sharing data among stakeholders, demonstrating transparency and making them feel involved.

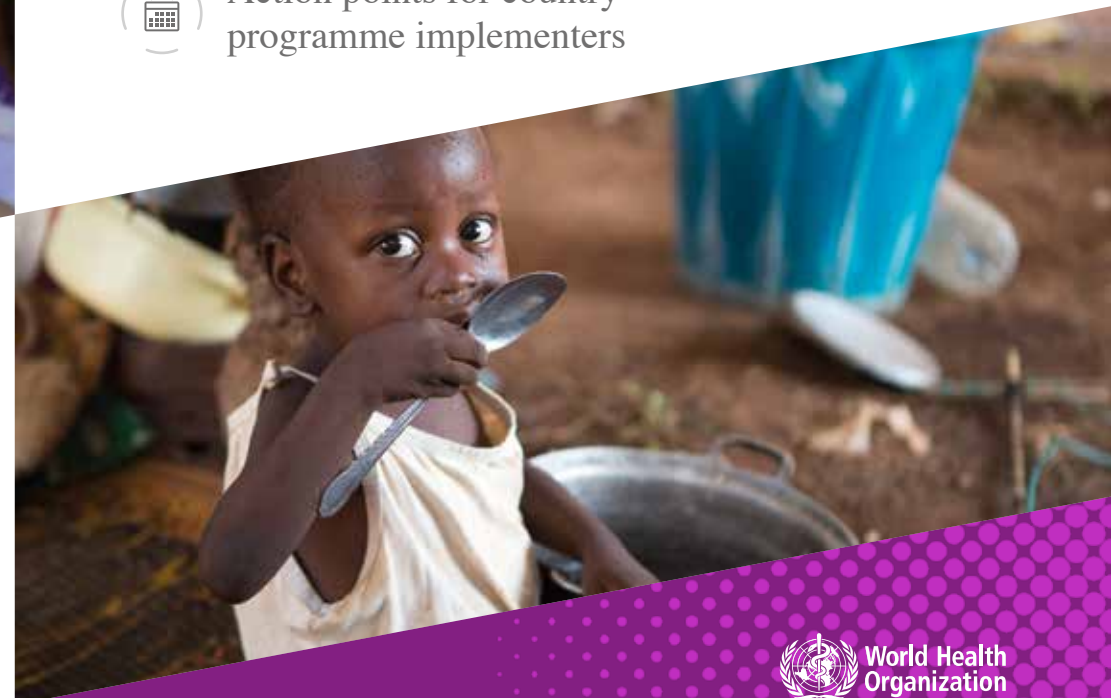


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## ON SETTING AND IMPLEMENTING A STUNTING REDUCTION AGENDA



Action points for country  
programme implementers



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# ( ) WHY STUNTING?



Stunting refers to low height-for-age as a result of chronic malnutrition. Stunted children are short for their age but not necessarily thin.

Stunting has negative consequences for a child's physical and mental development. Children who are stunted tend to achieve lower scores on intelligence tests and are more likely to become sick from infections. By adult life, they are at higher risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

But stunting is about more than just health. The healthcare costs which stunting generates and its impact on adult productivity also make it an economic issue. Investing in the reduction of childhood stunting is a sustainable way to boost national development.



There is political will to reduce stunting in many countries, but those implementing programmes face many challenges:

- ▶ How to coordinate the many stakeholders required
- ▶ A shortage of resources
- ▶ How to design programmes that truly address context-specific needs

## THE FOLLOWING ACTION POINTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN PLANNING STUNTING REDUCTION PROGRAMMES:

### [1] EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES ARE BASED ON COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH

A successful programme will target areas with high rates of stunting. This requires research for answers to the following questions:

- ▶ How many children are stunted?
- ▶ Where do they live?
- ▶ What are the causes of stunting in these specific contexts?

Work out what resources are available and how much action can feasibly be taken:

- ▶ Is there a budget?
- ▶ If not, are there potential sources of funding?



### [2] MAKE PROGRAMMES REACH AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE

- ▶ Disaggregated analyses of the average levels of stunting in each country reveal some groups that are more affected by stunting than others. This can be due to underlying cultural, ecological, socioeconomic and infrastructural factors.
- ▶ People living in poverty or rural areas have more limited access to social services, so programmes need to consider what extra efforts are required to make sure they are covered.
- ▶ Region- and community-based partners often have a better understanding of the local context. Programmes should establish how equipped they are to address the challenges in their specific environments, considering the following:
  - What is their capacity for planning, budgeting and programme management?
  - Do they have adequate staff numbers and resources to carry out the programme?
  - Is the basic infrastructure in place to ensure comprehensive coverage?

### [3] STUNTING REQUIRES A MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE

- ▶ Because stunting has multiple causes, the interventions which can help reduce it span many sectors. Bring on board partners from different disciplines and interest groups, and take action at the national, regional, community and household levels.
- ▶ Develop a common objective. The development of human capital, which the reduction of stunting allows for, is a powerful point of convergence for all parties. Communication and advocacy around stunting should make this central to its messaging.

#### a. Health

- ▶ Adequate antenatal and postnatal care in health facilities is pivotal in the first 1,000 days from conception until the age of 2 years, considered the most important for a child's development.
- ▶ Bring on board health workers and midwives, who interact directly with mothers and communities. At the same time, coordinate among them to avoid feeling that they are overloaded with work, and provide incentives to encourage their cooperation.

#### b. Education

- ▶ Incorporate nutrition and hygiene practices into the school curriculum. School gardens are an effective means of teaching children about following a healthy diet. Lessons learnt in school often lead children to push their parents to apply good nutrition habits at home.

#### c. Agriculture

- ▶ Malnutrition rates are especially high in rural farming areas, so reforming agriculture is a crucial step towards building healthy food systems.
- ▶ Farmer field schools, which assemble farmers to try out new ideas on their own farms, can help improve soil productivity and pest management. In the long-term, this allows farmers to grow a more diverse range of crops.
- ▶ Small family farms, in which food is produced for both market and home consumption, generate income for their owners which in turn allows for more diversified diets.
- ▶ Promote projects in the community based on small-scale animal production.
- ▶ Where food safety is a concern, enforce safe storage and handling.

#### d. Water and sanitation

- ▶ Contaminated water can lead to infections which hinder growth.
- ▶ Possible interventions include schemes to help every household own a latrine to avoid open-air defecation and expanding the supply of clean water to every household.
- ▶ Produce communication materials which encourage good hygiene practices such as hand washing with soap.