Symposium | [Track 9] Others (Global issues, Challenges, Policies etc.) | Symposium

[SY(T9)5] Global Nutrition Monitoring: Challenges, experiences and opportunities

Chairs: Chika Hayashi (UNICEF, USA), Kuntal Kumar Saha (World Health Organization, Switzerland)
Wed. Dec 7, 2022 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM Room 9 (Hall D1)
Organized by UNICEF Data / Analytics Section and WHO Department of Nutrition and Food Safety

[SY(T9)5-1] Improving the quality of child malnutrition data for SDG monitoring: mapping the unfinished research agenda

*Sorrel ML Namaste[1], On Behalf of the Anthropometry Working Group (1. The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program, ICF (USA))

[SY(T9)5-2] Meeting the measurement needs of the changing face of children's diets around the world

*Vrinda Mehra[1], Julia krasevec[1], Chika Hayashi[1], Laurence Grummer-Strawn[2], Kuntal Kumar Saha[2], Trevor Croft[3], Mary Arimond (1. UNICEF Data &Analytics Section (USA), 2. WHO (Switzerland), 3. The Demographic and Health Surveys Program, ICF (USA))

[SY(T9)5-3] Advancing methods, metrics, collection, and use of data on nutrition intervention coverage at household level

*Rebecca Heidkamp[1,2] (1. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (USA), 2. WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) (Switzerland))

[SY(T9)5-4] The Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative: toward the development of healthy diet metrics for national and global monitoring

Jennifer Coates[1], *Edward A. Frongillo[2], Francesco Branca[3], Lynnette Neufeld[4], Victor Aguayo[5], Shelly Sundberg[6], Sara Farley[7], Kuntal Saha[3], Chika Hayashi[5], Elaine Borghi[3] (1. Tufts University (USA), 2. University of South Carolina (USA), 3. World Health Organization (USA), 4. 1. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (Italy), 5. UNICEF (USA), 6. Bill &Melinda Gates Foundation (USA), 7. Rockefeller Foundation (USA))

[SY(T9)5-1] Improving the quality of child malnutrition data for SDG monitoring: mapping the unfinished research agenda

*Sorrel ML Namaste[1], On Behalf of the Anthropometry Working Group (1. The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program, ICF (USA))

Keywords:anthropometry, data quality, implementation research, malnutrition, surveys

Accurate data on child malnutrition is a key input for national governments and partners to develop and implement appropriate policies and programmes to address the nature and scale of malnutrition in their unique contexts. Height/length and weight are the most common anthropometric measurements used to define malnutrition. While seemingly simple, it has proven difficult to obtain accurate and precise measurements in population-based surveys and there have been concerns over the quality of these data. This precipitated the WHO and UNICEF to develop recommendations on the collection of anthropometric data in representative surveys. Using evidence-based information and expert experience, criteria and standards for collecting, analysing, and reporting malnutrition estimates were developed. The result has been remarkable progress in strengthening existing anthropometric measurement procedures and the adoption of new procedures in large-scale surveys, which has been shown to improve the quality of anthropometric estimates. Yet, there are many questions still to be answered. To advance this effort, the WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) formed an Anthropometry Working Group to set a global research agenda. Based on a collaborative, iterative consensus-development process the group identified nine research topics: 1) definition and use of biologically and statistically derived anthropometric z-score flag values, 2) thresholds for anthropometric data quality indicators, 3) making the standardization process easier to administer during training, 4) identification and disentanglement of random and systematic error, 5) accuracy of collecting a single versus multiple height/length measurements, 6) minimizing the impact of hair and clothing obstruction in height/length and weight measurements, 7) best practices and value of conducting re-measurement during field work, 8) effective collection of age data to generate anthropometric z-scores, and 9) innovations in measurement equipment. The release of briefs for each topic are planned on the research questions, type of research, primary and secondary outcomes, and data source with the intent of serving as a catalyst for addressing research in these areas. This talk will cover key research questions on anthropometric data collection in a survey context and offer insights on approaches to answer these questions. For anthropometric data to be beneficial to decision making, it is essential to increase engagement and investment in research on the 'how to' of collecting high-quality anthropometric data.

[Conflict of Interest Disclosure] None

[SY(T9)5-2] Meeting the measurement needs of the changing face of children's diets around the world

*Vrinda Mehra[1], Julia krasevec[1], Chika Hayashi[1], Laurence Grummer-Strawn[2], Kuntal Kumar Saha[2], Trevor Croft[3], Mary Arimond (1. UNICEF Data &Analytics Section (USA), 2. WHO (Switzerland), 3. The Demographic and Health Surveys Program, ICF (USA))

Keywords:nutrition, infant and young child feeding practices, diets

Background and objectives: Indicators for assessing infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF) were published in 2008 with an accompanying operational manual released in 2010. In the years following their introduction, these indicators have been used to assess the status of and monitor progress in child feeding practices using data gathered mainly through large-scale surveys such as the Demographic and Health Surveys and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. Following a decade of experience using the 2008 edition of the IYCF indicators, UNICEF and WHO organized technical consultations to revisit, refine and expand the set of recommended child feeding indicators, and released updated global guidance in 2021.

Results: Experience using the recommended IYCF indicators has raised some challenges related to definitions and operationalization. The updated global guidance addresses the issues highlighted during the technical consultations by revising the definitions for five out of the 15 previously existing indicators, excluding four indicators published in the 2008 guide from the 2021 edition due to challenges related to their interpretation, communication and operationalization and adding seven indicators that better measure the changing face of children's diets. For example: a major issue was that the minimum dietary diversity indicator, as defined in 2008, did not count breast milk as part of the diet diversity food groups while counting formula and milk, which led to breastfed children showing up as having less diverse diets than their non-breastfed peers in many contexts. Despite specific instruction against comparing breastfed and non-breastfed children in the previous guidance, experience showed that such comparisons were often made, which made assessment between breastfed and non-breastfed children unfair and inconsistent. To address this problem, minimum dietary diversity was revised to include breast milk as an additional food group. Another key issue was the lack of recommended standard indicators related to unhealthy feeding practices, which evidence suggested was a growing problem in many countries.

Conclusion: In total, the 2021 guidance has 17 recommended indicators, including the first ever global standard indicators to measure unhealthy eating practices. These indicators are key for supporting programmatic action and monitoring progress on IYCF at national and global levels.

[SY(T9)5-3] Advancing methods, metrics, collection, and use of data on nutrition intervention coverage at household level

*Rebecca Heidkamp[1,2] (1. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (USA), 2. WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) (Switzerland))
Keywords:intervention coverage, household surveys, equity , policy monitoring, nutrition informations systems

Coverage is generally defined as the proportion of the population who should receive a program, intervention or service that actually do receive it. It is a more proximal indicator of policy implementation than more distal outcomes including diet quality as well as micronutrient and anthropometric status. Many governments, implementing partners, donors, and advocates rely on periodic large-scale household surveys such as Demographic Health Survey (DHS) to monitor whether priority populations are equitably covered by nutrition policy actions. Administrative data also play a roll. Recent efforts to map the availability of coverage data for interventions included in national multisector nutrition plans across South Asia and West Africa identified multiple data gaps. This presentation highlights the progress that WHO-UNICEF TEAM and other initiatives are making to improve nutrition intervention coverage measurement across low and middle income countries (LMIC), while summarizing key research gaps and operational challenges that remain.

TEAM has supported multi-stakeholder efforts to develop new coverage indicators and advocate for their

collection. The 2017 Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework highlighted gaps in infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counseling coverage. In 2018, new IYCF counseling coverage indicators were endorsed by TEAM and adopted in the global DHS-8 questionnaire which is used in more than 90 countries. Ongoing indicator development work aims to fill data gaps or improve validity of metrics for coverage of maternal nutrition interventions during pregnancy including the gradual transition from iron folic acid to multiple micronutrient supplements as well as for nutrition-sensitive social protection and other nutrition interventions outside of the health sector. Recent investments in administrative data, including release of a core nutrition module for DHIS-2, also help fill information gaps on who is being reached with IYCF counseling, growth monitoring and promotion and acute malnutrition treatment.

TEAM and others are also working to improve collection and use of coverage data in countries. Recent National Nutrition Information Systems guidance emphasizes the importance of defining common core indicators and developing national and sub-national data strategies with explicit budgets and financing plans to ensure data are available to meet decisionmakers' needs. Nigeria and India are two examples of countries that feature intervention coverage data on scorecards, dashboards and sub-national profiles for nutrition audiences. Finally ongoing work to develop flexible methods for assessing co-coverage and composite coverage across multiple nutrition interventions will further support the use of data for planning and implementation of multisectoral nutrition strategies in LMIC.

Looking ahead, more research and collaborative effort is needed to define indicators of implementation quality and effective coverage of nutrition interventions within and beyond the health sector. There is also need to address cost challenges of regular population-based data collection, working on innovations in mobile surveys and other innovative sources of information about who is being reached.
[Further Collaborators] WHO-UNICEF TEAM Coverage Measurement Working Group

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[SY(T9)5-4] The Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative: toward the development of healthy diet metrics for national and global monitoring

Jennifer Coates[1], *Edward A. Frongillo[2], Francesco Branca[3], Lynnette Neufeld[4], Victor Aguayo[5], Shelly Sundberg[6], Sara Farley[7], Kuntal Saha[3], Chika Hayashi[5], Elaine Borghi[3] (1. Tufts University (USA), 2. University of South Carolina (USA), 3. World Health Organization (USA), 4. 1. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (Italy), 5. UNICEF (USA), 6. Bill &Melinda Gates Foundation (USA), 7. Rockefeller Foundation (USA))
Keywords:Diet quality, Metrics, Measurement, Food consumption, Global

Unhealthy diets and the associated burden of disease are a concern worldwide, with many countries grappling with nutrition and health issues caused by co- existing undernutrition and overweight and obesity. Healthy diets are critical for achieving several Sustainable Development Goals and the World Health Assembly global nutrition targets. Yet, no dietary intake indicators have been adopted for tracking progress toward these global targets in populations over 2 years old, and few countries routinely monitor their population's dietary intake to inform their own policies and programs. The limited availability and use of dietary data are due, in part, to the lack of consensus on which measures and indicators should be used

to capture important components of healthy diets with validity across settings and populations. This lack of consensus dissuades countries and donors from investing in data collection and use, hampering the tracking of their progress towards improved diets.

In collective recognition of this challenge and the need for action, WHO and UNICEF, through their Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM), have joined forces with FAO to resolve these issues and chart a way forward through the Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative. The Initiative is guided by a Strategic Planning Group that includes the Nutrition Division Directors from the three UN agencies, as well as TEAM Co-chairs and Secretariat, the TEAM diet quality technical working group, and key donors.

The presentation will summarize: 1) the goals and objectives of the Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative, 2) components of a healthy diet to prioritize for global and national monitoring, 3) an overview of the relative strengths and weaknesses of a range of diet quality metrics and tools, 4) plans for future research and potential next steps for achieving consensus and engagement with the broad community of stakeholders who are concerned with the assessment and monitoring of healthy diets.

[Further Collaborators] Mia Blakstad (University of South Carolina)