



**World Food
Programme**

**Programme
Alimentaire
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**Programa
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Alimentos**

**برنامج الأغذية
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Statement

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**Dialogue with Executive Heads of UN Funds and Programmes
on “Looking to the future of operational activities for
development of Funds and Programmes: Strengths,
weaknesses, opportunities and threats”**

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Introduction

- The 2011 MDG Report released just one week ago (7 July) here in Geneva cautioned that the world is on course to miss the United Nations target of halving the proportion of people that suffer from hunger by 2015- (MDG1).
- Despite reductions in poverty, the proportion of people in the developing world who are hungry has plateaued at 16 percent (down from 20%). Despite improvements in our understanding and knowledge of the main causes of malnutrition (food insecurity, poor health and inappropriate caring practices), nearly a quarter of children under five remain undernourished.
- The importance of nutrition stretches far beyond MDG1; it is central to the attainment of the range of development objectives. Inadequate nutrition leads to stunted bodies and minds. It is also an economic issue which hinders economic growth and development and reduces the potential of individuals and nations. Studies show that the cost of malnutrition to developing countries can be as high as 11 percent of GDP. It is one of the world's most serious but least addressed health problems.

A call for urgent action to scale up nutrition interventions

- The MDG progress report urges that nutrition must be given higher priority in national development if the MDGs are to be achieved. It calls for urgent, accelerated and concerted actions to deliver and scale up simple, cost-effective measures at key stages of the life cycle, particularly from the first 1000 days of conception to two years old.
- This represents a great challenge for the UN Funds and Programmes. How can we most effectively support developing countries in combating the scourge of malnutrition and achieving MDG1? How can we move beyond global policy dialogues to delivering at scale the direct nutrition interventions which are needed?

Overcoming systematic weaknesses through improved coordination

- Some of the first challenges faced are structural- particularly the lack of coordination across sectors like health, food security, social protection and education. This has been cited as a key factor hampering our collective progress towards achieving MDG 1 and improving the lives of millions of children in the developing world.
- The landmark 2008 Lancet series on maternal and child under nutrition, for instance, labelled the international system as being fragmented and dysfunctional. More often than not, UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies have tended to work alone, leading to nutrition programmes that are unsustainable and unsystematic.
- But considerable change is underway. There is a renewed focus on improving coordination and collaboration both at the macro level through fora such as the Standing Committee on Nutrition and the Committee on World Food Security as well as on the ground through the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the Poverty Strategy Reduction Paper processes. Such efforts are increasingly inclusive of all partners, not only across the UN system, but also amongst host governments, donor countries and civil society.

Capitalizing on the new momentum for Nutrition

- Building upon the “burden of knowledge” of the scientific and economic impacts of malnutrition, in the past few years a range of new initiatives have been launched at international, regional and country levels which have given the needed priority and attention to nutrition issues.
- Allow me here to emphasize the importance of the Scaling Up Nutrition Framework - the SUN- and the corresponding *1000 Days* advocacy effort launched by the US and Irish governments.
- This global movement has successfully brought together over 100 organizations, from different constituencies but all with a special focus and concern on nutrition. It outlines the policies and priorities for action needed to achieve rapid progress on nutrition and has been instrumental for mobilizing support for increased investment across sectors.
- The UN agencies must seize the opportunity and capitalize on this impressive global momentum for nutrition. Translate the heightened level of political will and support which currently exist into concrete practices and activities which give real benefits to undernourished people and nations.

Leveraging comparative advantages to support country-led efforts through REACH

- Here I would like to highlight REACH as an effective model through which to transfer the energy and heat of the SUN into substantial nutrition interventions at the country-level.
- Established in 2008 by FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO- four agencies with a special responsibility in nutrition- REACH is a facility to bring all stakeholders together to combat child under nutrition through a country-lead approach which promotes evidence-based nutrition interventions.
- The ownership and coordination rests with the national governments, and the role of the United Nations agencies in REACH is to work with partners and guide efforts to support governments to scale up proven and effective interventions that link child under nutrition, food security, health and care in a sustainable package.
- The UN agencies long-standing privileged relationship with governments and the breadth and depth of our presence in the programme countries make us uniquely positioned to do this.
- Another strength we have is the complementarities of our mandates. No single government ministry or UN entity can tackle under nutrition on its own; we need the range of expertise, experience and knowledge we have accumulated over the years across all the relevant sectors.
- Each agency focusing on what it does best, leveraging our core competencies and comparative advantages to support countries with a comprehensive package which includes policy advice, technical expertise and actual programme delivery. (FAO-agriculture; UNICEF-therapeutic feeding; WFP-food and supplementary feeding; and, WHO-health dimension) Each agency leveraging the strengths of their partnerships in civil society, academia and the private sector for a greater collective power.

- It is an approach that puts the child at the centre of our efforts, and not individual agency mandates. REACH is “One UN” and “Delivering as One” in action. It strives to be demand-driven, and not top-down. To be ‘useful and harmless, not useless and harmful’.

REACH statistics

- Based on successful pilots in Laos and Mauritania, REACH is expanding and by the end of 2011, programmes will be rolled out in 15 countries with high burdens of malnutrition.
- Some examples of its efforts include:
 - Sierra Leone: A cutting-edge operational research project is underway that explores the interactions between the smallholder value chain and nutrition programming funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
 - Bangladesh: The REACH-World Bank partnership is developing a simulation model for impact and cost of scaling up nutrition interventions.
 - Mauritania: Elevating nutrition as a national policy priority as the Prime Minister agreed to preside over new National Nutrition Development Council responsible for high-level decision making and setting national policy objectives.
 - Laos: REACH facilitated the mainstreaming of nutrition into the five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

Improving efficiencies and demonstrating results

- We have within our grasp a real opportunity to make progress on MDG1 and dramatically improve the lives of future generations in the developing world. However, the relevance of UN Funds and Programmes in any and all efforts on nutrition will depend on our commitment and ability to measure results and monitor progress.
- Faced with tight fiscal realities, donors are increasingly looking for programmes that offer the highest value for money and meet defined goals. It is not about investing in organizations; it is about investing in outcomes and results.
- Within nutrition, such efforts have already come a long way. Technical experts in the REACH and SUN efforts are focused on implementing robust monitoring and reporting frameworks that track inputs, outputs, outcomes and overall impact to ensure that we are ultimately both effective and efficient.
- Measuring both nutrition specific and sensitive approaches in a harmonized manner is also fundamental. Programme countries are already overwhelmed with diverse reporting requirements so our commitment is, therefore, not just measuring results, but doing so in a way that does not add burden or create multiple structures.

Applying lessons learned and taking nutrition to scale

- So what are the lessons learned from the REACH model so far? Firstly, there are benefits when we can reach a common understanding of a specific development challenge, forge consensus on its key elements and focus our collective efforts on supporting national governments tackling it.

- Secondly, the most effective programmes are those that are based on broad and inclusive partnerships, with the range of nutrition actors in civil society, and which overcome the silos between food security, health care, agriculture and other relevant sectors.
- Thirdly, we need to work with governments to develop scalable programme models whose worth is determined by the measureable results they achieve and the impact they have on the poor and most vulnerable.