

Workshop on Costing and Tracking Investments in Support of Scaling Up Nutrition
November 12-14, 2013 - Nairobi, Kenya

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Investing in nutrition is an evidence-based action for improving children's health globally.¹ Forty-three countries have committed to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement. Costing and tracking of investments in nutrition are important parts of the policy planning, implementation, and monitoring cycle. This workshop, organized by UNICEF on behalf of the UN System Network for SUN and supported by the SUN Movement Secretariat, is a response to requests for capacity building needed to accelerate progress with scale up. Eighteen SUN African countries were represented by the offices of Heads of State, Ministries (Finance, Health, Agriculture, etc), SUN Focal Points, and national nutrition bodies (43 in total). Donors, implementing partners, and global experts² also contributed (36 in total).

Objectives

1. To ensure that cost estimates are calculated based on the most appropriate methodologies
2. To ensure both nutrition-specific and sensitive interventions are considered
3. To integrate costing and tracking processes with implementation and monitoring
4. To form a core group of local and global resource people

Country Case Study Presentations on Costing and Tracking

The Gambia, a small country with a National Nutrition Agency under the authority of the Prime Minister, costed a national nutrition plan with interventions mostly within the health sector. **Mozambique's** costing of a national plan completed in cooperation with partners resulted in multiple cost estimates at various coverage levels but there is an urgent need for regionalized planning and costing. **Tanzania**, which has a strong financial management information system, has nearly completed a Public Expenditure Review (PER) tracking investments in nutrition. This tool is resource intensive and costly, and considered appropriate only for select countries to repeat every 3-5 years. **Madagascar**, used an ingredients approach to costing. Regarding tracking, Madagascar designed a template to capture investments in nutrition within government and carried out a survey to estimate investments outside the government budget. **Kenya** costed their National Nutrition Plan using the OneHealth tool and is progressing into implementation. **Ethiopia** used the REACH mapping tool, which led them to identify an inequitable concentration of development partners in regions of acute need. They also created and used an activity-based costing method, which includes costs for programs in education, water supply, and agriculture.

Technical and Interactive Sessions

Global experts presented current research, best practices and different methodologies on costing and tracking investments in nutrition. This was followed by two interactive sessions where participating SUN countries were asked to use a specific costing methodology and real cases to gain knowledge of how to track financial investments. Also, a panel of development partners from WHO, fhi360, AidData, and the World Bank presented on tools and how to apply them.

Lessons Learned

1. Costing and tracking are important steps for prioritization, implementation, monitoring and mobilising financing.

¹ Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Nutrition, 2013

² Sue Horton, University of Waterloo; Helen Connolly, ICF International/MQSUN; Clara Picanyol, Oxford Policy Management.

2. Integrated costing, implementation, and tracking is a continuous process.
3. The process of costing involves careful thought at different administrative levels and should include information on all assumptions and calculations.
4. Specific methodologies and tool selection depends on country context, cost, and systems.
5. Targets and coverage should be based on realistic expectations of system capacity.
6. A multi-sectoral approach is vital but needs national leadership and should not impede progress. Rollout within sectors should be accompanied by coordination across sectors.

Identified Gaps

Participants acknowledged key challenges in costing including the lack of definitive standards for interventions, estimating human resource needs, and selecting the most appropriate costing method for the context. In most countries, financial tracking of nutrition specific and sensitive interventions is still at an initial stage; more attention will be needed in this area in the near future.

Recommendations

Countries are encouraged to build on existing progress and move forward through the costing, implementation and tracking process; to continue sharing experiences with each other and gain experience on these methods; and to link local economics and finance experts with regional and global specialists. Though further research on the cost-effectiveness of nutrition-sensitive interventions is needed, undertaking a multi-sectoral approach (e.g., agriculture, water and sanitation, education, local development), mainstreaming nutrition policies, and achieving high-level government engagement will broaden the reach of nutrition plans. Governments can establish a budget account code for nutrition as one option to support tracking of resources. Implementing agencies and NGOs need to be more transparent about in-country program expenditures to make financial tracking more thorough. System capacity may be a limiting factor in implementation unless government investments in governance, personnel and infrastructure are included in the scale up plan. Countries identified continued needs for capacity building in costing and tracking (customized for regions and francophone countries) as well as support for multi-sectoral coordination, sub-national planning, implementation monitoring and resource mobilization.

The Way Forward

African countries are progressing in nutrition, though each is at a different stage. Costing and tracking are key steps in the implementation process. SUN Government Focal Points will convey written requests for capacity building needs (e.g. experience sharing, peer learning, and technical assistance) to the SUN Movement Coordinator. A

Working Group will facilitate a **networked response** with members of the SUN Movement Secretariat, UN Network System, and other partners (e.g., MQSUN, OneHealth Team, fhi 360). This process will ensure that country requests are addressed quickly and with the appropriate resources. Country stakeholders renewed their commitment to replicate lessons learned, **maintain national-level leadership**, and **move forward** in the process towards scaling up nutrition for the betterment of children’s lives and the future of Africa.

