ENDORSEMENTS

Dr Lawrence Haddad, Executive Director of The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

The Covid-19 crisis has made it ever clearer that inequity is a maker and a marker of malnutrition. The crisis hurts the nutrition status of the most vulnerable first and hardest. In turn, the malnourished will be more susceptible to the virus. This report shows us how to move towards greater equity and, hence, improved nutrition outcomes.

Gerda Verburg, United Nations Assistant Secretary General and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement

The 2020 Global Nutrition Report is launched in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. This is not only a health crisis followed by an economic crisis. In many developing countries, it is a health and nutrition crisis, combined with a socioeconomic crisis. Lockdowns impact people’s income, and their capacity to achieve food and nutrition security. Closed schools mean that school-meals programmes are no longer providing nutritious meals for children. Smallholder farmers and food producers, often women with few rights and limited ability to make decisions, will be particularly affected. In any new normal after this crisis, nutrition must be understood and recognised as an indispensable part of health, food, education and economic development. Particular attention must be paid to equity, the theme of this year’s report, ensuring that all forms of policy, action and systemic change support the poorest and most vulnerable, leaving no one behind.

Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

As the 2020 Global Nutrition Report highlights, now more than ever, we need to strengthen our collective efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable children benefit from good diets and nutrition services and practices. In particular, we need food systems and food environments that deliver nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets for all children, no matter where they live.

As we enter the final decade of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have an opportunity to accelerate our progress towards this goal, by more rigorously collecting, analysing and applying good-quality data to shape programmes that can bring us closer to ending malnutrition in all its forms. UNICEF is proud to be part of this important effort.

Shinichi Kitaoka, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Ahead of the Nutrition for Growth Summit, the 2020 Global Nutrition Report is a must-read. The world is in the middle of a war with the unprecedented threat of Covid-19. The endeavour to address malnutrition in all its forms, in addition to medical intervention, is an indispensable element in combating such infectious diseases. Balanced intake of nutritious food is essential for improving fundamental immunity. In this sense, we should emphasise the importance of improving nutritional status as a preventive measure, key to establishing a resilient society. Because good nutrition for everyone is also an important element of human security, taking swift action on nutrition will help to protect lives and dignity. Based on this understanding, JICA will make continued efforts to tackle malnutrition.

Dr Qu Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The call for transformation of food systems – to make healthy diets available, accessible, attractive and safe – has never been more relevant than now. The emergence of Covid-19 has highlighted the fragility of our food systems. We need to seize upon this crisis as an opportunity to rebuild and reshape food systems to be more resilient, equitable and sustainable. This calls for united action on all fronts to end the inequities in food systems that fail to make nutrition accessible and affordable for all. We should not settle for a world where over 800 million people go to bed hungry and where over two billion do not have access to quality diets. FAO stands ready to work with all stakeholders to make this food-systems transformation a reality and to ensure that no one is left behind.
Again this year, the Global Nutrition Report holds up a mirror to the world that reflects how well we are keeping our promise to end malnutrition. While we see encouraging instances of progress, the current global reality of conflict, and Covid-19 and its consequences, will throw us a significant curveball, and, as always, it’s the vulnerable who will suffer most. Let’s use this year’s report to examine, reflect and reset, and create a world where we like the face we see in the mirror.

Health inequities based on social factors such as employment status, income level, gender and ethnicity have significant social and economic costs to both individuals and societies. Inequities are at the root of many of the world’s greatest public health challenges. The focus of the 2020 Global Nutrition Report on “Action on equity to end malnutrition” highlights dramatic inequities in the burden of stunting, wasting, obesity, micronutrient deficiencies, and diet-related non-communicable diseases. It clearly lays out the issues in our health systems and food systems that limit the ability of vulnerable populations to receive the nutrition and care they need to live healthy and productive lives. Now is the time to take dramatic action and commit ourselves to eliminating inequities in malnutrition.

The 2020 Global Nutrition Report is an important reminder that the world needs to work together to tackle malnutrition, which has such a major impact on people’s lives. We must use these findings as a catalyst for more progress. The release of this report during the Covid-19 outbreak serves to remind us that those who are malnourished, including girls and women, will be particularly vulnerable to this disease, and Covid-19 will likely exacerbate malnutrition in low- and middle-income countries. The UK remains committed to a humane and responsible approach to preventing and treating malnutrition. It is part of our ambition to end the preventable deaths of newborns, children and mothers by 2030. Furthermore, preventing malnutrition can support efforts to boost economic productivity and resilience in low- and middle-income countries to reduce the impact of climate change. The UK especially supports the calls in this report to address inequalities in all forms of malnutrition, to make nutrition an integral part of healthcare provision and to support a shift to healthier, equitable and sustainable diets. Investment and action on nutrition is more crucial than ever.

The theme for this year’s report is timely and important: action on equity to end malnutrition. This edition of the Global Nutrition Report focuses on the inequities in basic social services and malnutrition outcomes. Earlier reports, including previous editions of the Global Nutrition Report, have already identified inequality as a major determinant for malnutrition. As the editorial of UNSCN News 43 (2018, ‘Advancing equity, equality and non-discrimination in food systems: pathways to reform’) states, “we need to reframe the problem of hunger and malnutrition as a problem of social justice, to address power in the food chains, to narrow the divide in social protection schemes and to strengthen the accountability of government”.

The Covid-19 pandemic shows the interconnectedness of the various systems that determine nutrition outcomes: the food, health and socioeconomic systems. It also shows that these systems now function in a way that means the most powerful and rich suffer less from the pandemic. Let’s join forces and use the lessons of this year’s Global Nutrition Report to address inequities in the system to end all forms of malnutrition and leave no one behind.
This report was produced by the Independent Expert Group of the Global Nutrition Report, supported by the Global Nutrition Report Stakeholder Group and the Secretariat at Development Initiatives. The writing was led by the co-chairs M.G. Venkatesh Mannar and Dr Renata Micha, supported by group members and supplemented by additional analysts and contributors.

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