



**Learning from Nutrition Programme Evaluations
A Thematic Report**



Child malnutrition costs lives.

- 20 million children under 5 suffer from severe acute malnutrition and are at a nine times higher chance of dying.
- One in four children under 5 are stunted, reducing chances of survival and hindering optimal health and development.

The stakes for UNICEF are high.

- Child survival and development is a key focus of the CRC and UNICEF's mandate – heightened role in emergencies
- New Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Outcome 4 concerns improved and equitable nutrition provision and results.
- Spending on nutrition is growing, esp. in emergencies – need for accountability; Major partnerships have also evolved.

Purpose / Objectives of the Report



To inform roll-out of UNICEF's Strategic Plan, new strategy for addressing child undernutrition, and future policies and programmes by

- Reviewing evaluation quality and coverage in the field of nutrition ((2009-13)
- Presenting findings and learning by evaluation criteria and cross-cutting issues
- Assessing the use of evaluations
- Providing recommendations to strengthen programming and results.



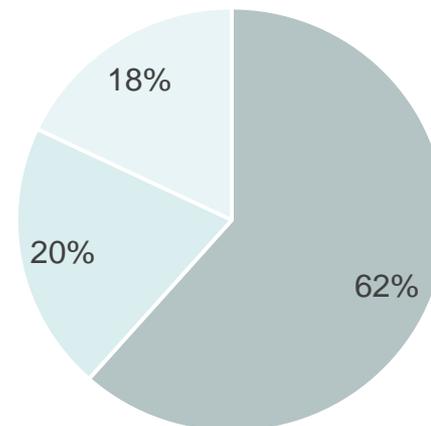
- **Quality is generally adequate** although one-third of the evaluations were “mostly satisfactory”
- **Evaluation coverage is inadequate** vis-à-vis requirements
 - Very few evaluations in some regions
 - Limited # of evaluations commissioned by ROs and HQ
 - Micronutrients is most commonly evaluated (36) and nutrition in emergencies the least (9)

Findings: Effectiveness



Effectiveness of UNICEF-supported nutrition programmes (n=39)

- All targets met or likely to be met
- Some targets met or likely to be met
- Target not met or unlikely to be met



- **Success factors:** strong partnerships, adequate system strengthening and capacity development, integration into national systems, rapid response in emergencies
- **Constraining factors:** unrealistic timeframes, gaps in programme design, inadequate funding, insufficient qualified personnel, weak M&E systems

Findings: Relevance, Efficiency and Sustainability



Relevance

- The majority of nutrition programmes are aligned with local needs and national policies
- 20% of evaluations identified weaknesses in programme design and insufficient multi-sectoral linkages

Efficiency

- Funding is unevenly distributed; Some components (infant and young child feeding, maternal nutrition, community management of acute malnutrition) are underfunded relative to need
- Weak evidence on cost efficiency issues
- Over half of the evaluations note weak human resource capacity (implementing partners) as a challenge

Sustainability

- The majority of evaluations note that programme sustainability and scale-up are a concern
- Key issues include:
 - Weak national systems, insufficiently trained staff, high turnover of staff
 - Failure to integrate nutrition into national health systems and lack of linkages with other sectors
 - Insufficient national ownership
 - Reliance on external funding/procurement, lack of national funding commitments

Findings: Cross-Cutting Issues



Equity and social inclusion

- Programmes were generally successful in adequately targeting those in need; reaching out to the hard-to-reach was a recurring challenge
- Only 3 reports looked at disability; all found that disability was not adequately integrated into nutrition programming

Sectoral integration, national systems and coordination

- Mixed findings on effective use of multi-sectoral approaches; weak technical support on use of multi-sectoral approaches is a concern.
- Weak national systems and capacities regularly undermine scale-up and sustainability
- Only a third of evaluations found coordination to be adequate

Partnerships

- Only a small number of evaluations report on partnership initiatives
- Where included, partnerships were found to have synergistic effects leading to gains in process, coverage and outcomes

Monitoring and evaluation

- Mixed findings: Some examples of successful M&E/innovative information systems; many references to weak monitoring and data gaps

Use of Evaluations



- **Management responses** have been prepared for 78 per cent of the nutrition programme evaluations conducted in the past five years
- Only 17 per cent of **planned actions** have been reported as completed, while 55 per cent of agreed actions are reported to be underway
- **Areas of evaluation use** have included
 - Advocating for and changing policy
 - Programmatic and operational shifts
 - Mobilizing resources and building ownership

Key Conclusions



- **Important achievements** were made through UNICEF nutrition programmes in recent years, however, much remains to be done to **improve programme performance and results.**
- Evaluations show **mixed findings on programme design as well as programme effectiveness** and both need to be addressed systematically.
- **Sustainability of results and programme scale-up** is a key concern. This will require enhanced funding, increased national ownership, significant investments in system-strengthening and use of multi-sectoral approaches.
- **Evaluation coverage** of nutrition programmes in both development and emergency contexts **falls below requirements. Increased investment in evaluation is required** (including evaluation of partnership initiatives) to match UNICEF's major commitment to improving child nutrition.
- **Follow up of actions planned in the Management Response has been insufficient.** It requires management action.

Recommendations (Summary)



- Improve nutrition **programme design** in line with results-based management principles, including
 - Identification and **sharing of good practices** and guidance
 - **Training** on results-oriented programme planning and management and on the use of multi-sectoral approaches
- **Strengthen national/local systems** to respond to priority nutrition needs through upstream policy work, technical support and institutional capacity development.
 - Prepare and disseminate context-specific **guidance/tools** on systems development and institutional capacity for nutrition
 - Enhance UNICEF's own capacity on **advocacy and upstream policy work** and nutrition system strengthening
- Develop strategies and plans to address gaps in **evaluation coverage**, especially in countries with a high malnutrition burden and in humanitarian emergencies.
- Improve the dissemination and **use of evaluations**.