

Wasting Reset

Wasting prevention, early detection and treatment to catalyse action and accountability

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2 | Advocacy

Solutions from the advocacy working group

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Key messages



High-level political commitment is needed to ensure that addressing child wasting is prioritised. Multi-sector and multi-stakeholder engagement is key to sustaining this political will. The Nutrition for Growth Summit provides a crucial opportunity to make such high level commitments.



Creating meaningful mechanisms for accountability is essential to ensure the commitments made bring about real and sustained change.

Background

Today, an estimated 50 million children under five years of age suffer from wasting, one of the most devastating forms of undernutrition. This figure has remained largely unchanged over the last decade and rates of child undernutrition and food insecurity are on the rise. Health, food and social protection systems do not currently work sufficiently to address wasting. The Nutrition Year of Action, the Food Systems Summit, and Nutrition for Growth are among several significant advocacy opportunities for resetting action on wasting and for transforming systems so they deliver much-

needed progress. These initiatives occur in the context of the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting (GAP)¹ and the development of GAP Operational Roadmaps, which are placing wasting front and centre on political agendas in select countries.

This brief intends to provide concrete recommendations for how diverse stakeholders can leverage advocacy and accountability to build momentum around these key milestones, to accelerate progress in reducing wasting.

Progress and achievements

Over the last decade, advocacy has played an important role in advancing progress towards wasting targets, as epitomised in over 70 countries providing severe wasting treatment within their national health systems. Many global commitments and targets related to wasting have been set, including the Rome Declaration (ICN2)² on eradicating malnutrition (including wasting); the World Health Assembly (WHA) global nutrition target³ to reduce childhood wasting to less than 5% by 2025 (extended to 2030), and to maintain it at this level; Sustainable Development Goal 2⁴ to reduce the proportion of children suffering from wasting to less than 5% by 2025, and to less than 3% by 2030; the WHA resolution 69.8⁵ on countries setting national wasting targets; and the GAP,⁶ which sets the target of reducing child wasting prevalence to less than 5% by 2025, and to further reduce wasting prevalence to less than 3% by 2030.

Advocacy efforts around other forms of undernutrition have led to concrete progress. The

Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, for example, has had success in ensuring stunting is prioritised within national development agendas through multi-sector and multi-stakeholder action (including the private sector). Tactics such as engaging high-level 'nutrition champions' and parliamentarians, and building alliances with diverse stakeholders, have increased the visibility of malnutrition within the political arena.

Accountability mechanisms focused on wasting exist: at global level, the Global Nutrition Report established a Nutrition Accountability Framework, and UNICEF and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office recently convened an Action Review Panel on Child Wasting that aims to improve the impact and sustainability of services to prevent and treat child wasting. Unfortunately, these mechanisms have yet to spur national or global prioritisation of wasting.

¹ In June 2019, the UN Secretary General commissioned UN agencies working on nutrition (the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO)) to prepare the first-ever GAP on Child Wasting. The plan aimed to respond to the slow progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on reducing childhood wasting, and to respond to growing calls for a more coordinated and streamlined UN approach to addressing this challenge. See: [About - What is the GAP? \(childwasting.org\)](https://www.childwasting.org/)

² FAO (2014) *The Rome Declaration on Nutrition*, <http://www.fao.org/3/ml542e/ml542e.pdf>

³ WHO (2014) 'Global Nutrition Targets 2025', *Policy Brief Series*, www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-NMH-NHD-14.2

⁴ UN 'Goal 2: Zero Hunger', www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/

⁵ UN (2016) 'United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)', https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_R8-en.pdf

⁶ <https://www.childwasting.org/>

Challenges and change needed

Key challenges impeding progress on wasting-related advocacy include the following:

- **A lack of high-level political commitment and leadership** to address wasting beyond the ministry of health level in many contexts, leading to insufficient efforts by other sectors to prevent wasting, insufficient prioritisation in key national frameworks, policies and priorities, and insufficient domestic funding. Wasting reduction remains largely a ‘humanitarian issue’, financed through an often externally-funded humanitarian response, and it is rarely included in development priorities and plans. Political commitment is needed to achieve large-scale and transformative system changes.
- **A lack of accountability:** Existing accountability mechanisms are unable to exert pressure on decision-makers to deliver on commitments made, and require strengthening. Aside from GAP frontrunner countries, there has been insufficient global efforts to operationalise calls for governments to set national wasting targets, and to be held accountable to them. Many countries have weak nutrition information systems, which impedes the use of data required to inform progress and take corrective, decisive action towards targets and commitments.
- **Insufficient multi-sector policies and multi-stakeholder engagement around wasting:** Health, food and social protection systems need to be transformed to address wasting. Despite being an issue that is impacted by health, food and social

protection systems, wasting is often considered only a health issue, with an emphasis on treatment. Wasting is rarely included in multi-sector and multi-stakeholder policies and plans, where prevention efforts are best placed. In addition, the integration of wasting within universal health coverage efforts has thus far been limited.

- Furthermore, progress towards wasting targets is hindered by **inadequate funding and financial monitoring**. Wasting is significantly under-resourced. Results for Development estimates a multi-billion-dollar financing gap in relation to adequately addressing wasting.⁷ Some countries have made progress in estimating the cost of wasting treatment. However, the costing of other wasting-related activities across sectors (health, food and social protection) remains a challenge. In addition, funds for wasting are often buried in humanitarian budgets and official development assistance, making it difficult to clearly understand the scale of the resource base that exists for wasting, funding predictability and where those resources are going. A global tracking and monitoring system would help improve our understanding of gaps and would make it possible to channel resources more effectively to where they are most needed. Adequately costing the actions required to address wasting and mobilising domestic budget/resources for wasting prevention and treatment is critical. Often, when international funding is removed, the system for treatment collapses, even though the majority of wasting cases occur in stable settings.

⁷ Results for Development. 2021. Tracking aid for the WHA nutrition targets: Progress towards the global nutrition goals between 2015 to 2019. <https://r4d.org/resources/tracking-aid-wha-nutrition-targets-global-spending-roadmap-better-data/>

Actions

How will change happen

Current opportunities to accelerate progress include the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), the Year of Action on Nutrition, the Food Systems Summit, the Nutrition for Growth Summit, the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact, the 2022 African Union Summit, the G20 Matera Declaration on Food Security, Nutrition and Food Systems, the work around 'Nourish the Future – A Proposal for President Biden's Administration', implementation of the GAP, associated finance roundtables and national launches, and UNICEF's 'No Time to Waste' framework.

Each of these present a unique opportunity to enhance advocacy and build momentum towards global wasting targets – but only if they are coupled with action and meaningful accountability.

The set of actions listed below intends to provide concrete recommendations for how the global advocacy community can strengthen political will and accountability for wasting.

Build political will and commitment to tackling child wasting

High-level political commitment at all levels is needed to ensure addressing child wasting is prioritised, that targets are set (and are adequate), and that long-term financing is dedicated to addressing malnutrition (including wasting). Multi-sector and multi-stakeholder engagement is key to sustaining this political will.



<p>Governments should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an ambitious pledge towards reducing the burden of wasting during the Nutrition for Growth Summit. • Develop high-level strategies for making wasting a public health and development priority. Strategies should focus on health, food and social protection system actions to reduce wasting. These strategies need to be led by a high-level decision-maker above sectoral ministries, and they need to be context-specific, multi-sector, multi-stakeholder (inclusive of the private sector and affected populations), costed and coherent, and they should aim to reach all wasted children. The strategies need to be embedded in national nutrition and multi-sector plans (including within development, health, universal health coverage, social protection, food security/agriculture, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) policies and plans). • Demonstrate leadership at the highest level to ensure multi-sector coordination, oversight of accountability mechanisms and decision-making related to nutrition (including wasting). • Allocate sufficient long-term funding to address wasting as part of multi-sector policies and programmes, acknowledging the long-term impact of COVID-19 on childhood wasting. • Convene country-level nutrition financing roundtables (coordinated with other concurrent national/sub-national dialogues) to understand resource gaps and domestic resources that can be leveraged to address wasting.
<p>UN agencies should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage UN senior leadership to continue championing a multi-sector and system strengthening approach to address wasting among national governments and donors, in humanitarian response plans, and in alignment with national development plans. • Leverage existing nutrition initiatives (including the SUN Network, SUN coordinators, the GAP, national platforms and Nutrition Clusters) to support country efforts to reduce the burden of wasting. • Support national governments to cost plans and mobilise resources for nutrition (particularly wasting prevention and management), and to diversify sources of more predictable funding at national and sub-national level.
<p>Civil society should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint national, multi-sector advocacy and engagement strategies in order to speak with one voice on the challenges around wasting, and to ensure policy-makers understand that wasting is a major public health and development concern. These strategies can include engaging parliamentarians and SUN platforms on better understanding and addressing wasting; cultivating high-level wasting champions through dedicated trainings; engaging media outlets; hosting regular events on wasting; increasing public awareness around wasting; and partnering with the private sector when appropriate. • Conduct budget analysis and tracking for nutrition spending – including wasting – and initiate data-driven budget advocacy to secure increased funding for wasting.
<p>Donors should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide long-term funding to wasting through multi-sector policies and programmes, and within longer-term systems strengthening approaches. • Convene donor champion meetings with other donors, through mechanisms such as national and regional multilateral bodies and SUN Donor Networks, to prioritise wasting and to ensure alignment on specific priorities and opportunities to leverage their shared voice and influence. • Donors in-country should issue a shared call to action for national governments to prioritise wasting.

Strengthen accountability at the global and national levels

Creating meaningful mechanisms for accountability, coupled with universal measurement and regular reporting

at all levels, is essential to ensure that commitments made bring about real and sustained change. Research has demonstrated that accountability is most effective when it is connected across global, regional and national levels, when civil society has a central role/voice, and when its activities are proactive, targeted and funded.

<p>Governments should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene multi-sector and multi-stakeholder consultations in order to: 1) establish national nutrition targets – including on wasting – as per resolution 69.8 and the GAP; 2) embed national targets in all relevant and upcoming policies and plans; and 3) review progress towards targets and develop action plans to address challenges. • Report on wasting targets annually through different national, regional and global platforms, including World Health Assembly sessions and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development voluntary national reporting system, as well as through tracking and monitoring scorecards. Such reporting should include data on population-level access to services and information as part of universal health coverage. • Establish mechanisms to ensure broad and consistent civil society participation in technical, policy-making and decision-making fora related to nutrition, as well as the participation of affected populations.
<p>UN agencies should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene one high-level global meeting on wasting between now and 2025. • Support government and civil society in conducting an analysis of existing national policies, action plans and budgets to assess the current prioritisation of wasting. • Support national accountability efforts, including strengthening nutrition information systems, financial tracking systems and the use of wasting data (including anthropometric, mortality, food security and health data). • Commit to actively and consistently engaging national governments, civil society organisations, and United Nations senior leaders from all relevant agencies (Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) in the GAP Action Review Panel. • Support the coordination of annual GAP Operational Roadmap reviews in each frontrunner country.
<p>Civil society should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen civil society organisations’ and SUN Civil Society Networks’ advocacy capacity and engagement on wasting through wasting-specific advocacy trainings focusing on budget-tracking/advocacy, policy/programme analysis, evidence analysis, dissemination and communication strategy. • Conduct social mobilisation activities, including special events and media campaigns, to increase the visibility of wasting across societies, counter the false assumptions about wasting (such as the perception that wasting is ‘only’ a humanitarian issue), insist on the prevention of wasting, highlight the long-term consequences of wasting, and strengthen the demand for change.
<p>Donors should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the financial support needed to convene and maintain an effective accountability mechanism at national and global level, potentially through a global tracking and monitoring system. • Make accountability and annual reporting on wasting indicators a requirement of financial investments. • Allocate necessary resources to facilitate participation and capacity building of civil society organisations on wasting advocacy and accountability, and to enhance demand generation for wasting prevention and treatment programmes.

Annex 1

Members of the Working Group

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The brief draws on the professional experience of individual members who engaged in a personal capacity in order to represent the nutrition sector as a whole, and does not reflect the position of any single institution. Where complete consensus on points was not achieved within the group, the majority view was used.

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