



# Catalysing action and accountability on the prevention, early detection, and treatment of Child Wasting

## A call to action

Wasting is the most visible type of undernutrition and carries the highest risk of death.<sup>1</sup> Children with severe wasting are up to twelve times more likely to die than well-nourished children. For children who survive, a single episode can stunt their growth and development. Despite strong evidence on solutions that work, little progress has been made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) (Zero Hunger) target, which calls for less than 3% prevalence of child wasting by 2030. Building on the momentum of 2021's UN Food Security Summit and the upcoming Nutrition for Growth Summit we must accelerate efforts to **drive greater action toward ending child malnutrition and helping ensure all children, everywhere, can reach their full potential.**

We, the signatories, commit to accelerate progress on the following six priority areas of action developed jointly with representatives from almost 50 governments and organisations across the world. These actions, compiled through the '**Wasting Reset**' process, align with and build upon the priorities identified through the **Global Action Plan (GAP) for Child Wasting**, UNICEF's '**No Time to Waste**' initiative, and the Coalition of Action for Zero Hunger.<sup>2</sup>

By agreeing upon the below priorities and acting together with urgency to realise them we can make a life changing difference for the millions of children experiencing wasting right now as well as the millions more at risk if we do not take urgent action.

### Build political commitment for tackling child wasting

The progress achieved over the last two decades in reducing other forms of undernutrition shows the impact of building political support and translating this into long-term financing linked to specific targets and goals. The time has come to build political commitment for tackling child wasting and achieving global commitments to reduce it. This must be coupled with clear accountability mechanisms which involve regular and transparent reporting at all levels. We are committed to maximising the accountability role of existing mechanisms including (but not limited to) the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, the Global Nutrition Report and the newly established Action Review Panel on Child Wasting.

<sup>1</sup> Other forms of malnutrition include stunting (being shorter than expected compared to those of the same age in a well-nourished population) micronutrient deficiencies (not having enough specific vitamins and minerals in the diet), overweight and obesity.

<sup>2</sup> A multi stakeholder coalition that aims to achieve ending hunger, in a sustainable and nutritious way, through support for priorities emerging from the Food Systems Summit Member State dialogues.

## Improve financing to address child wasting

There is a pressing need to secure sufficient financial commitments to achieve a significant reduction of wasting. Urgent political momentum is required to realise this financing from multiple sources; domestic resources, international donors, philanthropists and private sector investments. While we have good understanding of the costs of treating severe wasting, we need comprehensive financial estimates of what it will take to scale up preventative programming, that is part of longer-term and more flexible funding within a broad systems approach to nutrition.

## Strengthen a multi-systemic approach for the prevention of wasting

It is critical that child wasting is viewed as a condition that can and must be prevented. Prevention has received very little attention to date and global wasting goals will be impossible to reach unless the factors that lead to children becoming wasted in the first place are addressed. To do so, we must expand our understanding of the causes of child wasting in different contexts, and using proven, evidence-based solutions to design coordinated interventions across the food, health, water, hygiene and sanitation, and social protection systems. The GAP for Child Wasting offers clear direction for implementers to respond across multiple-systems in countries with the highest burden of child wasting and supporting its roll-out is an important priority.

## Scale up the treatment of wasting to reach more children in need

A renewed focus on preventing child wasting must not come at the expense of ensuring that all children suffering from wasting are reached with timely treatment services. Today, an estimated 3 out of every 4 children with wasting do not have access to life-saving treatment. To improve this, we must accelerate efforts to integrate treatment into primary and community health services around the world as part of the Universal Health Coverage agenda and ensure that these are accessible to every child that needs it. Successfully achieving this will require that we optimise and increase the efficiency of treatment services, including strengthening early detection in the communities, prioritising those at highest risk more effectively (small, vulnerable infants less than six months and children during the first two years of life) and simplifying our treatment approaches and protocols.

### Priority recommendations for the prevention, early detection and treatment of wasting, as agreed by the six Wasting Reset Working Groups

#### **Advocacy**

- high level political will needed at all levels
- Strengthen accountability for wasting at both global and national levels

#### **Financing**

- Increase political and financial commitments to reach Zero Hunger
- Develop more accurate and comprehensive financial estimates for wasting prevention

#### **Prevention**

- Improve situational and causal analysis to map out context-specific causes of child wasting
- Prioritise and scale up packages of preventative interventions, based on evidence

#### **Treatment scale-up**

- Integrate child wasting treatment in strengthened health systems
- Improve the efficiency of wasting treatment services

#### **Nutritional products for tackling wasting**

- Ensure that medical facilities are stocked with the supplies needed to treat wasting amongst children and pregnant and breastfeeding women
- Improve the cost-effectiveness of the production and programming of nutritional products and of programmes tackling wasting

#### **Policies and guidelines**

- Ensure timely, fit-for-purpose implementation guidance is available

# Improve the availability of nutritional food products for preventing and treating wasting

Ensuring good nutrition and supporting the prevention, early detection and treatment of child wasting can include the use of nutritional products. Increased domestic resource allocation will help to improve the availability of the products needed to prevent and treat wasting at country level. We must complement this by accelerating efforts to include relevant products in national essential medicines/commodities lists, strengthening national supply chains for their delivery, and increasing and improving local production capacity. We must also accelerate the development and large-scale use of new, more cost-effective, ready-to-use food formulations, improving needs estimation and increasing efficiency of quality testing.

# Strengthen implementation and contextualisation of wasting guidelines

Accelerating efforts to prevent, detect and treat child wasting require a conducive policy environment, one that promotes the scale up of proven, evidence-based approaches. We must provide timely, evidence-based and adaptable guidance on how to implement wasting guidelines and support their uptake. Further, these should focus on achieving optimal coverage of services for prevention, early detection and treatment. This includes: the need to ensure that strong community health worker systems are at the centre; be responsive to emerging evidence; be adaptable to different contexts and include mechanisms for the monitoring of nutrition and health programmes.



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