

Financing for Development: Mobilizing leadership and investment in nutrition

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The Third International Financing for Development (FfD) conference, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2015, marked a major moment for the global development community. The conference gathered high-level political representatives, including Heads of State and Government, and Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, as well as other relevant stakeholders, including 600 civil society networks and more than 400 business representatives.

**“A basis both for
financing sustainable development
and for developing
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The Addis conference was the first of three global moments in 2015 aligned in support of a new, post-MDG, sustainable development agenda. The other landmark moments included the adoption of the 17 Global Goals at the UN General Assembly (NY, September 2015) and the UN Climate Change Conference to establish a global agreement on climate change (Paris, December 2015). FfD was significant in its practical objective, which was to identify concrete pathways to make good on the ambitious goals to come. The conference resulted in a new global framework for financing sustainable development and a package of over 100 concrete measures drawing on all sources of finance, technology, trade and data that will ultimately support the implementation of the SDGs. In describing the framework agree-

ment, the conference’s Secretary General, Wu Hongbo, put it this way: “This framework is a basis both for financing sustainable development and for developing sustainable finance.”

A critical opportunity

Nutrition advocates saw the conference as a critical opportunity to keep nutrition high on the global agenda and bring the nutrition story to a broad set of decision-makers and global change agents. The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) was pleased to co-host an official side event at the conference, alongside partners including the Government of Ethiopia, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), UNICEF, the World Bank (WB), Results for Development (R4D), and 1,000 Days.

The high-level briefing and panel discussion, Financing Growth: Mobilizing Leadership and Investment in Nutrition, had two key objectives:

- > Highlight the importance of prioritizing nutrition financing within the SDG agenda; make the economic case for investing in nutrition; and highlight financing options (traditional, domestic, innovative, etc.); and
- > Serve as a launching pad for the first global costing of the World Health Assembly (WHA) target to reduce stunting by 40%, as well as provide financing scenarios to address the global resource gap. This was the first in a series of expected costings associated with the six WHA nutrition targets.

The imperative for countries to take action to scale up nutrition

Moderated by MI President Joel Spicer, the event opened with an inspired address by Ethiopia’s First Lady, Her Excellency Mrs Roman Tesfaye. As a SUN country, and because of Ethiopia’s



Her Excellency Mrs Roman Tesfaye, First Lady of Ethiopia, addresses the audience at the Financing Growth: Mobilizing Leadership and Investment in Nutrition event.



Meera Shekar, Global Lead, Nutrition, at the World Bank, presents the first in a series of costing and financing scenarios to reach the WHA global nutrition targets at the Financing Growth: Mobilizing Leadership and Investment in Nutrition event.

own deep and historic connection with famine, nutrition has become a priority focus for the government of Ethiopia (see box on Seqota Declaration), and the First Lady provided a welcome perspective on the imperative for countries to take action to scale up nutrition.

The side event then provided a platform for the release of important new costing analysis and financing scenarios linked to the WHA stunting target, to reduce stunting by 40% by 2025. The WB, R4D and 1,000 Days, in partnership with the BMGF and CIFF, estimated the cost of scaling up the seven interventions that have the highest impact on stunting reduction.

“By 2025, 74 million children could escape the scourge of stunting”

Their findings showed that expanding coverage of this set of critical interventions would cost approximately US\$8.50 per child per year. If sustained over 10 years, this relatively modest investment, together with improvements in the underlying determinants of malnutrition (improvements in GDP growth, food availability and diversity, women’s health, education, and empowerment), would allow the international community to succeed in meeting the WHA stunting target. More importantly, by 2025, approximately 74 million children would escape the scourge of stunting, and be better able to contribute to the growth of national economies. The impact would be far-reach-

ing as the return on investment for reducing stunting is one of the best investments in health and development: an average US\$18 for every US\$1 invested.

Defining a pathway to make critical investments achievable

Per child estimates are critical to driving home the affordability and imperative of investment. When rolled up, according to the WB and R4D analysis, strategic scale-up of evidence-based stunting interventions in the 37 high-burden countries (85% of stunting) will require US\$42 billion over the coming decade. Extrapolating to the rest of the world, a total of US\$49.6 billion more will be needed to combat stunting over 10 years. Given this costing, it is equally critical to define a pathway, or present scenarios, that make this price tag achievable. As a corollary to the costing presented by Meera Shekar, Nutrition Lead for the World Bank, there was a presentation on financing scenarios presented by Rob Hecht, Managing Director of Financing for Development. The underlying message was that while we need donors to sustain and grow their commitments and to leverage their convening power and influence, we also need others to bring resources and solutions to the table as well:

- > We need a “global solidarity” approach that sees an expanded accountability for financing nutrition.
- > Governments must prioritize nutrition, and provide adequate funding for nutrition programs. At least 30 SUN countries have come forward and made their budget allocations to nutrition known. It is time for the rest of the world to follow their example.



Dr Robert Hecht, Managing Director, Results for Development, talks about the cost of reducing stunting by 40% at the Financing Growth: Mobilizing Leadership and Investment in Nutrition event.



From left to right:

Dr Caroline Anstey, Global Head, UBS; the Hon. Christian Paradis, former Canadian Minister for International Development and Minister for La Francophonie; Joel Spicer, President and CEO, the Micronutrient Initiative; José Andrés Botrán Briz, President, Compañía Agrícola Industrial Santa Ana; and Dana J Hyde, CEO, Millennium Challenge Corporation.

- > We need new and innovative financing solutions to help address funding gaps, and spark innovation and creative solutions.
- > We need implementing agencies to identify missed opportunities for impact, and to work together to take advantage of existing investments in platforms reaching our target populations, to enhance their nutrition.

To underscore the theme of new financing, new approaches and new partnerships, the side event concluded with an arm-chair discussion moderated by MI President Joel Spicer.

“We need a ‘global solidarity’ approach”

The bottom line?

The message that came out of the side event at FfD was clear: business as usual is not the solution. Meeting global targets to address malnutrition will require new financing solutions, new leadership, new partnerships, increased accountability and political will. It will require a concerted effort by all partners to move out of low gear, and commit to accelerated progress.

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The Seqota Declaration

Ethiopia’s pledge to end malnutrition in a generation

The famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s was a catastrophic disaster. By 1983, approximately 7.8 million Ethiopians were struggling for survival, and an estimated 700,000 had perished. Hundreds of thousands of people were starving by the time images of emaciated children reached TV screens around the world and prompted international reaction.

A highlight of the Financing for Development Conference was the launch of the Seqota Declaration – an ambitious pledge by the Ethiopian government to end childhood malnutrition in Ethiopia within a generation.

The Seqota Declaration lays out a plan to stop the cycle of undernutrition by bringing together all areas of government. The Seqota Declaration and the government of Ethiopia are betting that we can win the fight against malnutrition if we apply the right tools, adequate resources, and political will.