

# Stakeholders Consultation on Adolescent Girls' Nutrition: Evidence, Guidance, and Gaps

**Date:** 30-31 October, 2017

**Location:** Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Washington DC, United States of America

## Scope and Purpose

### Background

Adolescent dietary patterns and eating practices have been changing over time due to a number of complex factors, including increasingly globalized food systems, and the increased production and availability of affordable ultra-processed food products. The nutrition of adolescent girls in particular has been identified as a key priority in the [2013 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Nutrition](#)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the [Global accelerated action for the health of adolescents \(AA-HA!\): Guidance to support country implementation](#) revealed stark differences in causes of death and disabilities when separating the adolescent age groups and sexes. [The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016-2030](#)<sup>2</sup>, which aims to achieve the highest attainable standard of health for all women, children and adolescents, underscores the importance of adolescent girls' nutrition - for themselves as well as for their infants and children, if and when they become mothers. Current nutrition programming, however, often does not prioritize this critical population. Although there is growing interest in nutrition among this cohort, there is limited knowledge of the current dietary practices of adolescents in low- and middle-income settings, given the changing food environment landscape. Additionally, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of programs and interventions specifically targeting adolescent girls, especially in low and middle-income countries.

In 2015, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the two USAID global nutrition projects – Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) and the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA) organized a [Technical Meeting on the Diet and Eating Practices of Adolescent Girls and Women of Reproductive Age](#). SPRING commissioned two papers as background for discussion during the meeting: [Adolescent girls', women's and maternal nutrition in low- and middle-income countries: current context and scientific basis for moving forward](#), which assessed the current scientific evidence, as well as the [Review of Programmatic Responses to Adolescent and Women's Nutritional Needs in Low and Middle Income Countries](#), which reviewed current programming efforts. This meeting concluded with the agreement that, while developing formal guidelines was important, there was not yet enough of an evidence base upon which to do so.

Building on the discussion and recommendations emerging from this meeting, USAID and SPRING contributed support to WHO's Department of Nutrition for Health and Development and other partners in developing a summary of key WHO nutrition-related recommendations targeting adolescents, for the purpose of consolidating existing guidance in one single document. SPRING also commissioned a report by Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta and his research team entitled *Diet and Eating Practices among Adolescent Girls in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review*. This document summarizes and assesses the current literature on the dietary intake and eating practices of adolescent girls in low- and middle-income countries, identifying and describing key consumption patterns across regions, and proposing a call to action and recommendations for policy, programming, and advocacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Bhutta et al., Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: what can be done and at what cost? Lancet, June 2013. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)60996-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)60996-4).

<sup>2</sup> Global accelerated action for the health of adolescents (AA-HA!): guidance to support country implementation. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

In order to engage key technical experts in the review of these new resources, PAHO/WHO, USAID, and SPRING are organizing a two day stakeholders consultation on 30-31 October, 2017, at the PAHO Headquarters in Washington, DC. This meeting will build upon the 2015 technical meeting, and will feature a presentation by WHO on the consolidated adolescent nutrition-related recommendations, and a second by Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta and research lead, Emily Keats, on the results and recommendations emerging from their systematic review. These presentations will be followed by participatory discussions among invited technical experts in defining the key evidence and implementation gaps, prioritizing future research, and proposing next steps.

### **Objectives of the Meeting**

The objectives of the meeting are:

1. To present the WHO recommendations that address adolescent girls' nutrition;
2. To present the findings of the report on the Diet and Eating Practices among Adolescent Girls in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review; and
3. To define key evidence and implementation gaps, prioritize future research, and propose next steps.

### **Expected results**

There are two expected results for this consultation:

1. Develop a list of key evidence and implementation gaps regarding the diet and eating practices of adolescent girls in low- and middle-income countries; and
2. Identify areas where additional guidelines and/or policy guidance may be needed.

### **Audience**

The audience for this event will include stakeholders involved in adolescent nutrition in several capacities, targeting a mix of researchers, donors, country representatives, and organizations that are actively involved in research or the implementation of nutrition programs addressing the needs of adolescent girls. It will also include members of a technical advisory group that was established by SPRING to support the systematic review.