

ADOLESCENT NUTRITION CALL TO ACTION

Better Data Now to Drive Better Policies and Programs in the Future

JUNE 2018

THE NUTRITION OF THE WORLD'S ESTIMATED

1.2 billion adolescents (10–19 years old) will have a profound impact on their current and future health and wellbeing, that of their children, and society as a whole. Through the promotion of healthy diet and eating practices during adolescence, we have the potential to mitigate nutritional deficits generated during the first decade of life, break intergenerational cycles of malnutrition, and limit the epidemic of obesity and noncommunicable diseases (NCD) in adulthood. However, quality data on boys' and girls' nutrition during this critical adolescent period is scarce, as is evidence of the effectiveness of nutrition policies and programs for this population.

To define key evidence and implementation gaps, prioritize future research, and propose next steps to move the adolescent nutrition agenda forward, a **Stakeholders Consultation on Adolescent Girls' Nutrition: Evidence, Guidance, and Gaps** was organized in October of 2017, co-hosted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the US-AID-funded Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project; and the Pan American Health Organi-

The 10 commitments of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) call for countries to ensure healthy diets throughout the life course. This must include adolescents.

zation (PAHO). More than 40 global experts, representing academic and research institutions, nongovernmental organizations, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), and several donor agencies, gathered at PAHO headquarters in Washington, DC. These experts discussed the findings of the report **Diet and Eating Practices among Adolescent Girls in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review**, a summary of the WHO document **Guideline: implementing effective actions for improving adolescent nutrition**, and relevant **presentations**.

The consultation emphasized the importance of generating and using high-quality data, working multi-sectorally, and engaging adolescents in research, program design, and implementation. Participants call on the international community to continue to raise awareness, encourage a coordinated and collective response, and prioritize specific actions that will generate the knowledge and data needed to improve adolescent nutrition.

SEVEN PRIORITY ACTIONS



Engage and partner with adolescents in the design and implementation of research, policies, programs, regulations, and guidelines, recognizing and learning from successful engagement with adolescents in other sectors.



Assess how nutrition policies and regulations shape the food environment and influence adolescent nutrition and diet quality.



Develop and use standardized indicators for assessing adolescent health, nutrition, and social and emotional well-being.



Ensure that adolescents are included in national nutrition surveillance, appropriately sampled in population surveys, and disaggregated in routine program monitoring data.

SEVEN PRIORITY ACTIONS (CONTINUED)

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Conduct quantitative and qualitative research to measure, analyze, and address the underlying determinants of malnutrition and the context-specific factors affecting adolescents' food choices, diet and eating practices, physical activity, and social and emotional well-being.
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Design implementation research to improve program delivery, utilization, cost effectiveness, and scale, exploring the use of existing programs and platforms when feasible.
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Conduct rigorous evaluations of interventions to assess their impact and determine the right combination and dosage of macro and micronutrients as well as the optimal age and duration for adolescent interventions to enhance growth and development outcomes.

The following organizations have committed to this **Call to Action**.

