

Monday 10 June 2024 – Roundtable summary
First Meeting of the Independent Expert Panel on Nutrition
Leaders & Experts Council for N4G

Summary: On June 10, 2024, at its Spring Meeting in Ben Guérir (Morocco), the Paris Peace Forum hosted the first meeting of the Independent Expert panel on Nutrition. This panel, convened as part of PPF's mandate as a partner of the Nutrition for Growth summit (N4G), aims to support the identification and then prioritization of essential investments and policy actions to improve nutrition in all its forms; and champion a broad mobilization of relevant actors for the N4G Summit. This first conversation emphasized the need for a comprehensive multisectoral approach to improve global nutrition, but with clear definition of the priorities and accountabilities for each sector. Multiple points were mentioned such as implementing evidence-based policies, fostering political will and attention, strengthening research including a focus on implementation research, exploring innovative financing mechanisms, enhancing communication strategies, and positioning nutrition as a key solution for global challenges. The group committed to working together to synthesis guidance on specific, actionable financial and policy commitments that can be tailored to individual country contexts.

1/ Initial recognition of the importance of evidence-based interventions

- Participants noted the slowdown in progress on reducing the triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition and increasing overweight and obesity in LMICs) due to the failures of the nutrition transition, which need to be reoriented toward healthy diet and lifestyles. Undernutrition, micronutrient malnutrition and overweight and obesity need to be tackled concurrently and not perceived within scientific research, investment and public policy as mutually exclusive or competing priorities.
- Participants concurred that the essential systems to activate to improve nutrition are health, agri-food and social protection systems. They also recognized the important opportunities offered by the education and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene systems to improve nutrition. The expansion of health to englobe human but also planetary health, as well as the importance of the climate change on nutrition were mentioned. As climate change directly impacts nutrition, the “trilemma” between diet/health/environment must be acknowledged.
- In this regard, participants highlighted the need to remove sectoral siloes and to focus on integration across sectors which will enhance coherent partnerships and policies.
- Participants noted the existence of a wide range of evidence-based policies and interventions to improve nutrition, even if there are still gaps in knowledge and this evidence is sometimes scattered. Successful interventions are available, but need to be adapted to specific contexts, while continuing to adjust informing them through up-to-date research and there is a particular need for implementation research to address bottlenecks to delivery.
- Among these interventions, participants stressed the importance of prioritizing and synthesizing different strategies into feasible interventions that can be effectively implemented by the countries that need them most. To do this, we need not only to identify

these actions, but also to translate them into workable solutions, solidly backed up by data. The Delphi method was mentioned.

2/ Developing solutions that are tailored to needs and politically realistic

- According to the participants, these intervention packages need to be adapted to national and local context. In this respect, discussions should be held on enabling countries to act at scale in implementing nutrition programs continuously integrating scientific contributions. However, participants agreed that lack of data in some countries regarding the nutritional status and dietary population groups limits the ability to prioritize investments or actions to those most at risk of malnutrition.
- In conjunction with the institutions present, participants discussed how to scale up these interventions, notably through the World Bank's investment framework, which is currently being finalized. One of the final contributions of this working group could be to propose a set of evidence-based interventions with an associated investment case. However, the participants highlighted that this working group's recommendations are to go beyond just the WHA global targets and 1000 days which are focusing on undernutrition only. Participants noted that the thematic working groups established for the preparation of the Nutrition for Growth Summit represent a robust framing and recommendations of this panel should align with those themes.
- In the context of financial constraints, innovative funding mechanisms can also provide various resources. In this context, the need to mobilize multilateral development banks, but also other relevant funders, was underscored.

3/ Establishing coherent partnerships and policies

- Participants mentioned that reframing nutrition as a key solution to broader development challenges can help attract a wider range of stakeholders and increase investment in the sector. Furthermore, participants highlight the need to build a coherent narrative across sectors presenting nutrition as a valuable solution that offers significant returns on investment as this perspective can make nutrition more attractive to investors. Some relevant cross-sector approaches were mentioned such as “nutrition and health”, “gender and nutrition” and the “one health approach”, which could be considered in the future meetings.

“Nutrition is both a maker and a marker of human capital”

- Progress in the field of nutrition has largely been built on strong partnership. Participants expressed the fact that it is essential to continue fostering these collaborations to maintain and accelerate progress, while considering best practices and lessons learned from previous experiences. The private sector has an important role to play, particularly in the agri-food system but not only good and beverage companies, and we should foster an operating environment that encourages them to produce healthier, more nutritious foods while setting regulations that limit impacts of unhealthy foods. Participants emphasized that rigorous evidence generation must accompany innovations to improve agri-food systems.

Participants also highlighted that linking nutrition to broader development requires consideration of economic growth and other development policies in order to build strong partnership.

- Participants recognized the constrained fiscal space of many partner countries and donor governments and discussed opportunities to use this to drive forward evidence-based fiscal policies. For examples that were discussed included fiscal policies to reduce sugar consumption, which is the second most subsidized crop in the world, and policies to encourage or mandate front-of-pack labeling and regulate marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

4/ Ensuring continuity and accountability though to N4G 2025 and beyond

- Participants agreed on the importance of continuously improving existing nutrition programs.
- They also insisted on the need to ensure that SMART commitments are being made but also are accountable, particularly in relation to the Global Nutrition Report. A focus should be especially on assessing global accountability through progress reporting for example.
- The participants underlined the importance of a comprehensive communication strategy and clear message to help shift public perception and policy priorities. The need to reframe nutrition as both an indicator and a driver of quality healthcare is fundamental to emphasize the role of nutrition in overall health outcomes.

Next steps: the Paris Peace Forum will offer participants a series of future meetings and workshops prior to the N4G Summit.

List of participants:

- Abécassis, Adrien (Chief Policy Officer, Paris Peace Forum)
- Baker, Shawn (Chief Program Officer, Helen Keller Intl - chair)
- Bhutta, Zulfiqar (Founding Director, Institute for Global Health and Development, Aga Khan University and University of Toronto)
- Branca, Francesco (Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety, WHO - online)
- Delisle, H el ene (Emeritus Professor at the University of Montreal, President of the Scientific Council of Action contre la Faim)
- Garrett, Greg S. (Executive Director, Access to Nutrition Initiative)
- Ghosh, Shibani (Research Associate Professor, Food and Nutrition Programs and Policy Division, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Global Nutrition Report Independent Expert Group Co-Chair - online)
- Haddad, Lawrence (Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition)
- Khan, Afshan (Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition)
- Krebs, Nancy (Professor, Pediatrics-Nutrition, University of Colorado - online)
- Neufeld, Lynette (Director, Food and Nutrition Division, FAO)
- Perry, Abigail (Director of Nutrition, World Food Programme)
- Pont, Briec (Special Envoy and Secretary General, Nutrition for Growth Summit)

- Shankar, Bhavani (Professorial Research Fellow in Food systems, Nutrition and Sustainability, Institute for Sustainable Food, University of Sheffield)
- Shekar, Meera (Global Lead, Health, Nutrition & Population, World Bank)
- Udomkesmalee, Emorn (Senior Advisor, Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University)
- Zanello, Giacomo (Professor, University of Reading, Global Nutrition Report Independent Expert Group Co-Chair)