

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE (as of 20 February 2017)

A side-event for the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Women and labour: A nutritional perspective

Co-hosted by Argentina and Sri Lanka¹ in collaboration with FAO, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO and the World Bank

20 March 2017, 1:15-2:30pm, Conference Room 11, UNHQ, New York

Event objectives

As the theme for the 61st session of the CSW is “**Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work**”, this side-event discusses the economic impacts of women’s malnutrition and how targeted measures to improve women’s nutritional status have major gains in economic development. The event will solicit successful examples on how nutrition policies help push forward the economic empowerment of women and in particular female headed households, hence benefitting their families as well. The event also showcases how governments embed nutrition in national strategies and plans, looking at policies and investments in health, the food systems, education and social protection programmes that contribute to ensuring that no one is left behind. It will encourage country leadership and learning as Member States prepare their national plans to advance the implementation of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025, the Second Global Strategy on Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health 2016-2030, and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Background

Preventing malnutrition in all its forms is essential for achieving all Sustainable Development Goals. Nutrition inequities are driven by political, economic, geographic and social factors, and multiple malnutrition burdens disproportionately affect women. Malnutrition – undernutrition, overweight and obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies – is a driver and an outcome of inequity, poverty, and ill-health and represents a significant barrier to equitable and sustainable social and economic development both in developed and developing countries. Improved food security and nutrition also helps foster peaceful societies.

Overweight and obesity are important risk factors for noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, certain cancers and cardiovascular diseases that cause severe disabilities and push people out of employment. Increasing household costs for health care and loss of breadwinners are forcing millions of families into poverty annually and women often stay home in the role of a caregiver.

Research indicates that women who have greater control over household resources are healthier and better nourished — as do their families — because women tend to spend more on the nutrition, health, and well-being of their households. In addition, women often make significant contributions to their families' production of essential crops. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women provide 60-80% of the labour involved in producing food for household consumption and sale.

Adequate nutrition is important for women not only because it helps them be productive members of society but also because of the direct effect maternal nutrition has on the health and development of the next generations. The toll of women’s malnutrition in all its forms on maternal and infant survival, well-being and long lives stands in the way of countries' work toward achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to improve child survival and to promote healthy child growth. It needs to be promoted, protected and supported in all circumstances. Exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life ensures

¹ Other co-hosting countries will be confirmed later.

adequate and affordable nutrition and contributes to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Estimates suggest that up to 11% of gross domestic product (GDP) is lost to maternal and child undernutrition and the total economic impact of obesity is estimated at 2.8% of GDP worldwide. Investments in nutrition are among the best in development, with a return of between \$4 and \$35 for every \$1 invested. A World Bank report **“An Investment Framework for Nutrition Reaching the Global Targets for Stunting, Anaemia, Breastfeeding, and Wasting”** (2016) states that the world needs \$70 billion over 10 years to invest in high impact nutrition-specific interventions in order to reach the global targets for stunting, anaemia in women, and exclusive breastfeeding for infants and to scale up the treatment of severe wasting among young children.

Through adequate investments in nutrition, countries are able to improve the health and wellbeing of their population in addition to major economic benefits. **The United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025**, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 1 April 2016 through Resolution 70/259, invites all countries and stakeholders to eradicate malnutrition in all its forms by increased investments and political support. The Decade, co-convened by FAO and WHO, sets a concrete 10-year window of opportunity for nutrition action at national, regional and global levels in order to achieve the existing six global targets for nutrition by 2025 and to attain the corresponding SDG goals and targets through setting, tracking and achieving of concrete, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) commitments. Another UN-led programme in combatting women’s malnutrition is the **UN Secretary-General’s Second Global Strategy on Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health 2016-2030** which is a roadmap to achieve the right to the highest attainable standard of health for all women, children and adolescents.

Organizing partners

- 1) **The side event will be co-hosted by Argentina and Sri Lanka (Norway and Indonesia TBC).** The pairing of countries from the north and the south emphasises the universal problem of malnutrition and the need for action by all governments.
- 2) **The co-hosts will be supported** by WHO, FAO, UNICEF, UN Women and the World Bank.
- 3) **The event will be an open event**, targeted at Member States and representatives of the UN system, civil society, financial institutions, regional influencing bodies, parliamentarians and donors that work in multi-sectoral ways in support of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the Second Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescence’s Health, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Format

The format of the side event is a panel discussion with representatives from the governments and co-hosting organizations. After introductions and panel, a possibility for questions and comments will be provided. Conference Room 11 has seats for approximately 100 participants and web streaming will be provided to ensure global reach. The event will be livestreamed on UN Web TV.

Technical requirements

Audio-visual services including microphones, screen, and technician, will be needed to enable showing video messages and presentations. Interpretation services can be provided pending availability of funds.

Draft programme

Moderator: Dr Nata Menabde, Executive Director, WHO Office at the United Nations

1:15-1:17 Opening: Dr Nata Menabde, Executive Director, WHO Office at the United Nations

1:17-1:22 Keynote: Ms Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau, First Lady of Canada (video message)

1:22-1:25 WHO: Dr Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General (TBC)

1:25-1:30 FAO: Ms Carla Mucavi, Director FAO Liaison Office in New York (TBC)

1:30-1:35 UN Women: Ms Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Director

How UN Women's commitments fit into the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition commitment process (suggestion)

1:35-2:05 Panel discussion: Member State examples of investing in maternal nutrition for women's empowerment

Question: How is your government using the Nutrition Decade to empower women?

Argentina: (Speaker TBC)

Concrete actions + SMART commitment

Sri Lanka: (speaker TBC)

Concrete actions + SMART commitment

Norway/Indonesia: (country/speaker TBC)

Concrete actions + SMART commitment

2:05-2:15 Q&A

2:15-2:20 UNICEF: Head of Nutrition (TBC)

Support women's need to breastfeed in the workplace (breastfeeding arrangements being one of the component of maternity protection policies)

2:20-2:25 World Bank: Speaker TBC

Topic to be identified

2:25-2:30 Wrap up / End of session