



MAY 2017

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Considering the U.S. Government's
Global Nutrition Coordination Plan

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Carol Conragan

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Center for Strategic & International Studies
1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
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202-887-0200 | www.csis.org

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Executive Summary

In the array of U.S. government initiatives, strategies, and programs that are tackling the persistent challenge of global malnutrition, the *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021* (GNCP or plan),¹ released in June 2016, comes at an opportune time. Nutrition programs play a central role in achieving sustainable development; of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 12 SDGs contain nutrition indicators.² Moreover, the recognized importance of global nutrition programs to improve health and economic outcomes has grown exponentially over the last decade. According to the *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, “Improved nutrition is the platform for progress in health, education, employment, female empowerment, and poverty and inequality reduction.”³ Global nutrition programs also make good “cents”: for every \$1 dollar invested, programs return a \$16 benefit, under even the most conservative calculations.⁴ Today, global nutrition programs in the United States enjoy bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, and the U.S. government recognizes, now more than ever, the fundamental importance of global nutrition interventions. From the presidential initiative Feed the Future, launched in 2010, to the *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021*,⁵ released in September 2016, U.S. global nutrition interventions are gaining recognition as a fundamental component of sustainable development.

A Whole-of-Government, Volunteer Initiative

Released in June 2016, the GNCP functions as a whole-of-government coordinating platform and a programming guide to steer U.S. government nutrition experts and advisers (working in the United States and internationally) toward carefully considered global nutrition activities and programs. The purpose of the GNCP is to “strengthen the impact of the many diverse nutrition investments across the U.S. government through better communication, collaboration, and linking research to program implementation.”⁶ As plan drafters reasoned: “nutrition is a clear multi-sector priority that requires sustained attention in the coming years from multiple U.S. government actors. Where resources are limited, better coordination will allow previously dispersed efforts to build upon collective lessons learned and achieve stronger results.”⁷

¹ U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) et al., *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021* (Washington, DC: USAID, June 2016), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/nutritionCoordinationPlan_web-508.pdf.

² International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), *Global Nutrition Report 2016: From Promise to Impact: Ending Malnutrition by 2030* (Washington, DC, IFPRI, 2016), xix, <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/130354/filename/130565.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 77. See also John Hoddinott, Mark Rosegrant, and Maximo Torero, “Challenge Paper: Investments to Reduce Hunger and Undernutrition,” Copenhagen Consensus 2012, April 9, 2012, <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/hungerandmalnutrition.pdf>.

⁵ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021* (Washington, DC: USAID, September 2016), <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USG-Global-Food-Security-Strategy-2016.pdf>.

⁶ USAID et al., *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*

In addition, the plan drafters believe that maximizing the impact of government actions and investments (from headquarters to embassies) will accelerate progress toward meeting the World Health Assembly 2025 Targets for maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets), SDG 2 (to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture), and other U.S. government global commitments.⁸

The GNCP *does* establish a whole-of-government mechanism to strengthen the impact of the many diverse nutrition investments across agencies, but the question remains—and this report analyzes—whether the GNCP will be a viable solution. Does a voluntary, whole-of-government effort to galvanize resources for global nutrition programming have the staying power it needs to succeed? If it does, the GNCP could serve as a useful and timely model for other agencies to emulate.

Evolving with the Nutrition Landscape

The GNCP is a “living document” that will operate within existing funding levels and evolve as global nutrition strategies and goals evolve.⁹ The plan stresses its intention to inform nutrition actions without guaranteeing funding levels beyond what is already planned.¹⁰ Membership is voluntary and open to technical advisers engaged in both domestic and international nutrition programming. Currently, active participants include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Millennium Challenge Corporation; Peace Corps; U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (including the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention); U.S. Department of State (including the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator); and U.S. Department of Treasury.

Forming a Strong Community of Practice

Through seven specific coordination actions with set deliverables and timelines, the plan is structured to form a strong community of practice. The coordination actions establish a secretariat that will rotate annually and a technical working group (TWG) to oversee implementation. Because USAID receives the majority of U.S. government global nutrition funding, it is leading implementation of the plan through a shared effort among the Bureau for Food Security; the Office of Food for Peace within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA); and the Bureau for Global Health, through the Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition and the Office of HIV/AIDS.

To better coordinate global nutrition programming, the GNCP offers a hearty menu of aspirational nutrition interventions.¹¹ It provides six illustrative focus areas that would benefit from interagency partnerships. Drafters chose these based on the shared interest of two or more agencies and a desire to increase collaboration in six areas: food fortification, nutrition

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Given the well-considered parameters of the Plan, the drafters do not expect to make any considerable changes in the coming five years. USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 10.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 26.

information systems, food safety, the first 1,000 days, nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases, and HIV and nutrition. The plan also notes 19 key government actions that contribute to the six WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets.¹²

Success Hinges on the Continued Commitment of the Interagency Partners

The GNCP is an impressive volunteer effort, but it is too soon to tell whether it will become a worthwhile, whole-of-government practice or whether it will wither once this unique group of devoted nutrition experts and officers disperse. Even in its nascent stages, however, the GNCP framework appears promising. Positive aspects of the plan include: *good timing* with growing government backing for global nutrition programs and bipartisan support; a lauded, whole-of-government approach; a seat at the nutrition table for smaller agencies; a strong community of practice through complementarity of expertise and jointly shared administrative actions; increased global nutrition program support through designated points of contact (POCs) at U.S. posts abroad; and the built-in flexibility to expand (or contract) the plan's mandate as global nutrition priorities evolve.

Recommendations

The GNCP is operating with two fundamental roles: (1) as an interagency, administrative handbook, and (2) as an aspirational guide to strengthen the impact of global nutrition programs. To advance the GNCP's roles and goals, the United States should consider the recommendations that follow.

Consider Dietary Diversity and Overnutrition

The plan drafters identified six global nutrition focus areas, but excluded dietary diversity and overnutrition. Given the importance of nutrition-sensitive agriculture to improve health and socioeconomic outcomes and given the alarming disease burden due to overnutrition, the GNCP is missing an opportunity to create new synergies where cutting-edge programming is needed. Plan drafters assert that dietary diversity will be well covered within the first 1,000 days sub-working group and that over-nutrition will be included in the noncommunicable diseases sub-working group. **Still, given the important contributions these two programming components can make in alleviating global malnutrition, a continued focus to build synergies and substantive programs in dietary diversity and overnutrition among the GNCP partners is strongly encouraged.**

Institutionalize the Plan

For the GNCP to become a well-functioning—and institutionalized—interagency platform that maximizes the use and application of U.S. government resources, the plan's procedures and systems will need to be incorporated as routine operations. To this end, the U.S. government

¹² The 19 key U.S. government actions can be found at: USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 12–13.

should **draft a detailed implementation plan that operationalizes the administrative components of the seven coordination actions and clarifies other administrative functions.** For example, the implementation plan should define roles and responsibilities, benchmarks, and timelines for the coordination actions; include terms of reference for the nutrition POCs at U.S. posts and define their authorities to promote country-led nutrition efforts; establish decisionmaking rules of procedure; and develop a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan that includes tracking the seven coordination actions, the 19 key U.S. government actions, and the 53 proposed joint ventures.

Foster Communications among the U.S. Government, Implementing Partners, and Civil Society

Given the GNCP design as a platform for information exchange, it stands to reason that the greater global nutrition communities in the United States and overseas would also benefit from opportunities to communicate with their U.S. government counterparts. Implementing partners and civil society organizations (CSOs) would benefit from in-person meetings, brown-bag lunches, and brainstorming sessions. These exchanges would also give implementing partners and CSOs an interagency forum to raise programming gaps and to brainstorm solutions. Thus, to better inform implementing partners and the greater global nutrition community on the GNCP, the U.S. government should **convene an in-depth presentation of the plan and establish a schedule of routine information exchanges** here in the United States and at posts abroad.

Introduction

In the array of U.S. government initiatives, strategies, and programs that are tackling the persistent challenge of malnutrition, the *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021* (GNCP) is unique. It is not a U.S. government program with assigned appropriations and an administrative framework. It is not a presidential initiative or other legally mandated process. But it is an official U.S. government plan—a living document—with a well-considered, whole-of-government approach and a group of dedicated nutrition experts who have formalized how they will work together. Through the plan’s interagency partnership, and within existing funding levels, these experts expect to improve nutrition outcomes around the world—to accelerate progress toward the World Health Assembly (WHA) 2025 Nutrition Targets, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other U.S. government global nutrition commitments.

More than three years ago, when the plan was still an idea, the founders shared a passion for the work they do and a common understanding on several fronts: they knew the value of global nutrition programs to improve health outcomes and economic opportunities; they knew, through proven studies, that such programs offer a high return on investment (approximately \$16+ for every \$1 spent); they knew that nutrition programs required multisectoral coordination across agencies; and they suspected that additional funding was not likely to appear. Thus, the question, and challenge, for nutrition leaders was and continues to be: how can they maintain the upward trajectory of global nutrition programs—implementing evidence-based, sustainable interventions—with the resources they have, not the resources they would like to have? The GNCP was the answer to that question.

The GNCP functions as a coordinating platform and a programming guide to steer government nutrition experts and advisers toward carefully considered global nutrition activities and programs. Through seven specific coordination actions with set deliverables and timelines, the plan is designed to improve communication and collaboration on global nutrition interventions and to link research to program implementation. It also establishes a secretariat that will rotate annually, a technical working group (TWG) to oversee implementation, and seven sub-working groups that will meet monthly to work on shared goals. Because the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) receives the majority of U.S. government global nutrition funding, it is leading implementation of the plan through a shared effort among the Bureau for Food Security; the Office of Food for Peace within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA); and through the Global Health Bureau’s Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition and the Office of HIV/AIDS.

As voluntary members of the plan, the interagency partners¹ assist in implementing the

¹ Plan partners currently include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Millennium Challenge Corporation; Peace Corps; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (including the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention); U.S. Department of State (including the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy); and U.S. Department of Treasury.

coordination actions. To better coordinate global programming, the GNCP also provides three recommended action areas and six illustrative focus areas that would benefit from interagency partnerships. Through the plan, the founders intend to leverage resources (expertise, research, personnel, and funding) that, in turn, will accelerate progress toward the U.S. government's and the international community's shared global nutrition goals. (See Chapter 3 for a detailed analysis of the GNCP.)

While the GNCP does establish a whole-of-government mechanism to better coordinate interagency cooperation, the question remains—and this paper analyzes—whether the GNCP will be a viable solution: does a voluntary, whole-of-government effort to galvanize resources for global nutrition programming have the staying power it needs to succeed? To answer that question, this report considers, in Chapter 3, the goals and objectives of the plan: what it hopes to do, and how it hopes to do it. But first, Chapter 1 traces the trajectory of global nutrition as an increasingly important development solution and Chapter 2 outlines current nutrition-related initiatives and strategies. Chapter 4 then assesses the advantages of the plan and Chapter 5 closes with inherent challenges and several recommendations.

01

The Global Nutrition Movement: A Decade of Nutrition Milestones

Why Nutrition Now?

Today's nutrition experts well understand the importance of global nutrition programs to improve the health and economic outcomes of those living in low- and middle-income countries. Over the last decade, nutrition as a sustainable development solution has become increasingly significant. Twelve of the 17 UN SDGs contain nutrition indicators reflecting nutrition's central role in sustainable development.² According to the *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, "Improved nutrition is the platform for progress in health, education, employment, female empowerment, and poverty and inequality reduction."³ Still, the number-one driver of the global disease burden today is due to malnutrition and poor diets. "Childhood stunting . . . has life-long consequences not just for health, but also for human capital and economic development, prosperity, and equity."⁴

Consider: of the approximate 7 billion people on earth in 2016, about 2 billion (28 percent) were suffering from chronic malnutrition. Of the estimated 667 million children under age five, 24 percent (159 million) were stunted, over 7 percent (50 million) were wasted, and 6 percent (41 million) were overweight. In addition, out of 5 billion adults worldwide, nearly 2 billion were overweight, and one in twelve of those were suffering from type 2 diabetes.⁵

Nutrition experts also know from proven studies that ignoring nutrition is likely to have a lasting, negative impact on a country and its citizens. The incidence of malnutrition in Africa and Asia, for example, costs these regions an approximate 11 percent annual loss in gross domestic product (GDP).⁶ Moreover, the World Bank calculates that all forms of malnutrition cost the global economy an estimated \$3.5 trillion per year.⁷ Even though the global community contributes approximately \$991 million a year to improve global nutrition, it remains an

² International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), *Global Nutrition Report 2016, From Promise to Impact, Ending Malnutrition by 2030* (Washington, DC: IFPRI, 2016), xix, <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/130354/filename/130565.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁴ Meera Shekar et al., *An Investment Framework for Nutrition, Reaching the Global Targets for Stunting, Anemia, Breastfeeding, and Wasting* (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2016), xxii, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/758331475269503930/pdf/108645-v2-PUBLIC-Investment-Framework-for-Nutrition.pdf>.

⁵ IFPRI, *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁷ Shekar et al., *An Investment Framework for Nutrition*, 3.

underfunded sector.⁸ “Nutrition is the biggest missed opportunity in global health. It could unleash waves of human potential—yet only 1 percent of foreign aid goes to basic nutrition.”⁹

According to the *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, the world is off track to reach the WHA 2025 targets for nutrition and noncommunicable diseases. “Nearly all countries are off course . . . for meeting targets on anemia in women and adult overweight, diabetes, and obesity. Obesity and overweight, rising in every region and nearly every country, are now a staggering global

Nutrition is the biggest missed opportunity in global health. It could unleash waves of human potential—yet only 1 percent of foreign aid goes to basic nutrition.—Bill and Melinda Gates, “Warren Buffett’s Best Investment,” Annual Letter 2017.

challenge.”¹⁰ Global funds to reach these nutrition targets are also insufficient. In 2016, the World Bank estimated that an additional investment of \$70 billion over 10 years will be needed to achieve global targets for stunting, anemia in women, exclusive breastfeeding, and the scaling up of the treatment of severe wasting.¹¹

Nutrition Milestones Help Refine Global Programs

While global nutrition experts understand the importance of nutrition as a development tool to improve socioeconomic and even security and political conditions in low- and middle-income countries, many attribute the launch of nutrition as a *development priority* to a series of events that began approximately 10 years ago. This chapter reviews some of these milestones.

In 2006, World Health Organization Recognizes the Environment’s Impact on Child Growth

In 2006, when the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its child growth standards (from its previous 1977 recommendations), the findings influenced the future design of global nutrition programs. The report concluded that “ethnic differences on the growth of infants and young children in populations is small compared with the effects of the environment.”¹² With a better understanding that a healthy environment can play a critical role in ending severe chronic and acute malnutrition, practitioners expanded the scope of interventions and a multisectoral approach began to emerge.¹³ Nutrition-specific and sensitive programs at that time included

⁸ Results for Development Institute, “Today, \$991 million of development assistance is spent on high-impact interventions that prevent stunting and anemia, treat wasting, and increase exclusive breastfeeding rates,” 2016, <http://donors4nutrition.r4d.org/>.

⁹ Bill and Melinda Gates, “Warren Buffett’s Best Investment,” Annual Letter 2017, February 14, 2017, <https://www.gatesnotes.com/2017-Annual-Letter>.

¹⁰ Note also that the report recognizes that many countries are on course for meeting targets related to stunting (except Africa and Oceania), wasting, and overweight among children under age five, and the targets related to exclusive breastfeeding. IFPRI, *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, xix.

¹¹ Shekar et al., *An Investment Framework for Nutrition*, xxvi.

¹² World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “WHO Child Growth Standards and the Identification of Severe Acute Malnutrition in Infants and Children,” 2009, 3, <http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/severemalnutrition/9789241598163/en/>.

¹³ Nutrition-sensitive programs address the underlying causes of malnutrition and are recognized as a fundamental (and multisectoral) component of improving global nutrition outcomes. Such interventions cover a wide range of

public education in hygiene practices and exclusive breastfeeding, and improving water and sanitation systems to protect children against communicable diseases.¹⁴

The Food Security Crisis of 2007 to 2008 and the Learning Curve

Then in 2007 to 2008, the consequences of the food security crisis were felt around the world, exacerbating poverty and threatening political and economic stability and national security.¹⁵ According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the crisis occurred not because of food scarcity, but because mass populations were living in poverty at a time when global food prices were soaring.¹⁶ This perfect storm caused a ripple effect that increased the number of undernourished people from 850 million in 2006 to more than 1 billion in 2009. It also increased the number of people living in poverty by 50 million, leading to civil unrest, including food riots and a reduced confidence in world markets.¹⁷ The crisis spurred a call to action in the global community, but program interventions were insufficient. According to post-assistance studies, the provision of seeds and fertilizers as the fundamental response was not technically or financially sustainable. As a result, the global community learned that “where possible a systems approach should be used to effect improvements along the whole chain from inputs to production to markets.”¹⁸ This realization further substantiated the multisectoral approach to nutrition that emerged from the WHO revised growth standards.

The Lancet Series of 2008 and 2013: Malnutrition’s Link to the Global Disease Burden

While the global community was learning that environmental factors play a critical role in children’s growth and that a multisectoral approach was needed to address malnutrition issues, *The Lancet* published a series of five papers on maternal and child nutrition in 2008. The series looked at nutrition-related deficiencies in low- and middle-income countries and showed the links among malnutrition, high mortality, and the global disease burden. It identified the need to focus on the crucial period from conception to a child’s second birthday—the 1,000 days in

program areas, including agriculture, food safety, humanitarian assistance, health and family planning, economic strengthening, education, early childhood care and development, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). USAID, *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025* (Washington, DC: USAID, May 2014), 33, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USAID_Nutrition_Strategy_5-09_508.pdf.

¹⁴ WHO, “Community-based Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition,” May 2007, 4, http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/Statement_community_based_man_sev_acute_ma_eng.pdf.

¹⁵ The FAO attributes this global impact to several overlapping circumstances, including episodes of drought, high energy costs that impacted production and transportation, and low food stocks (which led to price volatility). Moreover, governments restricted exports (to protect their consumers) and this caused “a panic on international markets.” WHO, “Community-based Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition.”

¹⁶ In the three years up to and during the crisis, global food prices had risen 83 percent and the FAO’s world food price index had increased 45 percent during 2007 and 2008. “As of March 2008, average world wheat prices were 130% above their level a year earlier, soy prices were 87% higher, rice had climbed 74%, and maize was up 31%.” See Eric Holt-Giménez and Loren Peabody, “From Food Rebellions to Food Sovereignty: Urgent Call to Fix a Broken Food System,” *FoodFirst Backgrounder* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2008), https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/BK14_1-spring-2008-Food-Rebellions.pdf; and Anup Shah, “Global Food Crisis 2008,” *Global Issues*, August 10, 2008, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/758/global-food-crisis-2008>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

which good nutrition and healthy growth have lasting benefits throughout life.¹⁹ These findings would come to play a pivotal role in advancing the importance of global nutrition programming. As a result of the 2008 *Lancet* series, development agencies across the globe increased their political commitments and revised their strategies to address undernutrition, focusing interventions on the first 1,000 days.²⁰

As a result of the 2008 *Lancet* series, development agencies across the globe increased their political commitments and revised their strategies to address undernutrition...

Five years later, in 2013, the *Lancet* updated its earlier findings and concluded that malnutrition was the single greatest threat to child survival, responsible for nearly half of all child deaths each year (3 million children under age 5). It flagged obesity as a growing problem in low- and middle-

income countries, identifying the double burden of malnutrition (under- and over-nutrition).²¹ This series also assessed international efforts and national programs in nutrition and noted the "massive unfinished agenda."²²

In July 2009, Global Leaders Join Forces at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy

The impact of the global food security crisis had sufficiently alarmed the G8 member states to include food security as a main topic at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, in 2009.²³ Silvio Berlusconi, then-prime minister of Italy and president of the G8, noted that over one billion people were suffering from starvation or malnutrition and that the situation was "aggravated by insufficient investment in farming over the past few decades, and by the economic crisis."²⁴ Thus, 40 leaders at the summit signed a joint "Statement on Food Security" committing significant financial resources to support agriculture and to eradicate hunger in developing countries. The leaders also established a Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security (Global Partnership) that would "keep agriculture at the core of the international agenda, re-launch investments, and boost aid efficiency and international coordination."²⁵

At the summit, then-U.S. president Barack Obama pledged to provide at least \$3.5 billion over three years to the Global Partnership. In total, the international donor community pledged \$22

¹⁹ "Maternal and Child Nutrition Series," *The Lancet*, June 6, 2013, <http://www.thelancet.com/series/maternal-and-child-nutrition>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ The G8 member countries are Canada, Russia, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, together with the European Union represented by the European Council's duty president and by the president of the European Commission, http://www.g8italia2009.it/G8/Home/Summit/G8-G8_Layout_locale-1199882116809_Partecipanti.htm.

²⁴ L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, "The Main Issues," G8 Summit, L'Aquila, Italy, July 10, 2009, http://www.g8italia2009.it/G8/Home/Summit/G8-G8_Layout_locale-1199882116809_TemiPrincipali.html.

²⁵ L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, "L'Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security," G8 Summit, L'Aquila, Italy, 10 July 10, 2009, http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/LAquila_Joint_Statement_on_Global_Food_Security%5b1%5d%2c0.pdf.

billion to promote global agricultural development, improved nutrition, and food security.²⁶ While this funding target was met and exceeded in the years that followed, dedicated funding for nutrition represented a very modest portion of the total commitment. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), official development assistance (ODA) for nutrition programs from 2008 to 2010 was 3 percent of the total food and nutrition security budget.²⁷

The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program: An Infusion of Funds in 2009

An important funding mechanism to promote global nutrition programs—especially in rural, poor locations where agriculture is the primary livelihood—was realized at the G20 Summit, in September 2009, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At the summit, world leaders pledged approximately \$22 billion to be channeled through a multidonor trust fund, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP). Managed by the World Bank, and established in 2010, the funds also are meant to improve incomes and food and nutrition security in low-

income countries by boosting agricultural productivity.²⁸

...official development assistance (ODA) for nutrition programs from 2008 to 2010 was 3 percent of the total food and nutrition security budget.

November 2009: The Rome Principles Call a Halt to Malnutrition

In November 2009, FAO hosted the World Summit on Food Security. There, global heads of state recognized the need to increase agricultural output by 70 percent to feed a world population expected to surpass 9 billion in 2050. The declaration, adopted at the summit, known as the “Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security,” stated that “measures have to be taken to ensure access—physical, social and economic—by all people to sufficient, safe and *nutritious food* with particular attention to full access by women and children [emphasis added].”²⁹ The declaration also called on heads of state, government, and international and regional organizations to “undertake all necessary actions required at national, regional and global levels and by all States and Governments to halt immediately the increase in—and to significantly reduce—the number of people suffering from hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.”³⁰

²⁶ Marian Lawson, Randy Schnepf, and Nicolas Cook, “The Obama Administration’s Feed the Future Initiative,” Congressional Research Service, January 29, 2016, 2, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44216.pdf>.

²⁷ Sinead Mowlds, William Nicol, and Earnán Cleirigh, “Aid for Nutrition and Security,” OECD/DAC, July 13, 2012, 3, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/povertyreduction/Brochure%20on%20Food%20Security%20FINAL%2013%20July%202012.pdf>.

²⁸ The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, <http://www.gafspfund.org/>.

²⁹ UN Food and Agriculture Organization, “Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security,” November 16–18, 2009, 2, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fishery/wsfs0911-2.pdf>.

³⁰ Ibid. The Declaration defined the concept of food security: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization and stability. *The nutritional dimension is integral to the concept of food security* [emphasis added].”

In 2010, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Boosts Global Nutrition Programs

The SUN movement began after an influential policy brief, “Scaling Up Nutrition: a Framework for Action,” was published in the March 2010 issue of the *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*.³¹ The brief stressed the importance of scaling up domestic and international support for nutrition because the issue was serious, the evidence was overwhelming, and interventions showed results. The brief asked the global community to take action to reduce global undernutrition, particularly among the youngest and most vulnerable children.³² Over 80 institutions endorsed the policy brief, including UN agencies, scientists, parliamentarians, journalists, entrepreneurs, professional associations, community organizers, medical practitioners, civil servants, and business leaders. The movement includes voluntary commitments of “SUN Countries,” now 59 in total, that agree to follow the SUN Movement Principles of Engagement.³³ The movement is currently in its second phase and using its “Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Strategy and Roadmap (2016–2020)” to further galvanize international, country-led efforts to reach the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets.³⁴

The Copenhagen Consensus: An Economic Argument in 2012 Fortifies the Nutrition Movement

In 2012, through the Copenhagen Consensus, the *Challenge Paper on Hunger and Malnutrition* provided a pivotal economic argument to further justify the importance and value of global nutrition programs. Not only are such programs known to improve health and economic outcomes, but they also are cost effective. The central premise of the paper was that investments that reduce hunger and under-nutrition “are simply good economics.”³⁵ The authors of the paper assessed the cumulative impact of bundled nutrition interventions to

...estimated returns, including health and socioeconomic gains, from bundled nutrition investments ranged from \$15 to \$138 for every dollar spent.

reduce mortality and the prevalence of stunting. They reviewed 36 countries (accounting for 90 percent of the moderately or severely stunted children worldwide) and found that combined interventions would reduce stunting at age 36 months by 36 percent and mortality by 25 percent.

³¹ Keith Bezanson and Paul Isenman, “Policy Brief: Scaling Up Nutrition: A Framework for Action,” *Food and Nutrition Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (2010), http://www.inffoundation.org/pdf/Policy%20Brief_FINAL_%20FNB_v31n1.pdf.

³² *Ibid.*, 8, 9.

³³ SUN Movement, <http://scalingupnutrition.org/>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ With updated analysis from previous papers, the authors found, for example, that it would cost \$50 million a year to eliminate the vitamin A deficiency in approximately 163 million pre-school children who were vitamin A deficient at that time (in 2012). “An investment of \$100 million per year would eliminate the iodine deficiencies affecting 1.8 billion people. . . . The annual cost of eliminating maternal anemia during pregnancy, assuming that supplements could be provided during ante-natal visits, is \$160 million.” John Hoddinott, Mark Rosegrant, and Maximo Torero, “Challenge Paper: Investments to Reduce Hunger and Undernutrition,” Copenhagen Consensus 2012, April 9, 2012, 42, <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/hungerandmalnutrition.pdf>; <http://www.cop>.

They also found that estimated returns, including health and socioeconomic gains, from bundled nutrition investments ranged from \$15 to \$138 for every dollar spent.³⁶ Bundled interventions in the study included improving the health of mothers through iron fortification, salt iodization, and iron-folic acid supplementation (during pregnancy); improving care behaviors (through community-based nutrition programs on breastfeeding and complementary feeding and hand washing); addressing health-related causes of poor pre-school nutrition; and improving the quantity and quality of a child's diet (through food supplements and ready-to-use therapeutic foods).³⁷

In 2012, the World Health Assembly Sets Today's Global Goal: The 2025 Targets for Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition

In May 2012, the WHA established the six WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets—now the internationally accepted and shared goals addressing the double burden of nutrition in mothers, infants, and young children.³⁸ The WHA guidance recommends priority interventions to scale up evidence-based, effective nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive investments in order to:

1. Reduce by 40 percent the number of children under five who are stunted;
2. Reduce anemia in women of reproductive age by 50 percent;
3. Achieve a 30 percent reduction in low birth weight;
4. Ensure no increase in childhood overweight;
5. Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months up to at least 50 percent;
6. Reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5 percent.

WHO selected the targets after considering the predominant conditions contributing to nutrition-related morbidity and mortality occurring from conception to two years old.³⁹ The criteria used to select the six targets included: their epidemiological and public health relevance; availability of effective and feasible evidence-based public health interventions; evidence that targets can be achieved in all countries regardless of income level; consistency with targets included in existing policy frameworks; existence of surveillance systems or data collection instruments and the potential for establishing baselines and monitoring changes over time; and national capacity for monitoring proposed target indicators.⁴⁰ The proposed targets were vetted through an open dialogue that included regional consultations with member states in January 2011 (in Africa, the Americas, South-East Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Western

³⁶ Ibid., 35.

³⁷ Ibid., 34, 35.

³⁸ The 65th session of the WHA was held in Geneva, Switzerland. See WHO, "Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Policy Brief Series," 2014, http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/149018/1/WHO_NMH_NHD_14.2_eng.pdf.

³⁹ Mercedes de Onis et al., "The World Health Organization's Global Target for Reducing Childhood Stunting by 2025: Rationale and Proposed Actions," *Maternal & Child Nutrition* 9, no. 52 (September 2013), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mcn.12075/full>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Pacific), and through an open, web-based process with member states and multilateral organizations across the globe.

WHO also published six policy briefs to accompany each of the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets.⁴¹ To promote nutrition investments and effective interventions, each policy brief includes a detailed account of the nutrition target, estimated annual targets (where applicable), and why each target is critical to improving nutrition outcomes.⁴² The briefs also recommend evidence-based, prioritized action areas designed to assist policymakers in reaching the target. Participating countries are encouraged to set their own annual reduction rates calculated with the results of country-specific analyses.⁴³

In 2013, the First Nutrition for Growth Summit Infuses Global Programs with \$4.5 Billion

On June 8, 2013, world leaders signed the Nutrition for Growth Compact at a high-level summit, in London, committing \$4.5 billion by 2020 to:

- Improve the nutrition of 500 million pregnant women and young children;
- Reduce the number of children under five who are stunted by an additional 20 million;
- Save the lives of at least 1.7 million children by preventing stunting, increasing breastfeeding, and improving treatment of severe and acute malnutrition.⁴⁴

The funds are working to make world-class scientific knowledge and evidence available to promote nutrition-rich and resilient crops, breastfeeding (for improved nutrition), and the development of national nutrition plans. The funds also are supporting the private sector in designing nutrition interventions as workforce welfare priorities.⁴⁵

⁴¹ To access each brief, go to www.who.int/nutrition/publications/globaltargets2025_policybrief_overview/en/.

⁴² WHO estimates that the annual reduction rate for stunting is approximately 3.9 percent/year. See De Onis et al., "The World Health Organization's Global Target for Reducing Childhood Stunting by 2025." WHO estimates the annual reduction rate for anemia is approximately 6.1 percent/year. See WHO, "Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Anemia Policy Brief," 2014, 3. WHO estimates the annual reduction rate for low birth weight is approximately 3 percent/year. See WHO, "Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Low Birth Weight Policy Brief," 2014, 1. WHO does not identify an annual reduction rate for childhood overweight but sets the goal of "no increase" in childhood overweight. The related WHO policy brief recommends that national government authorities "assess the best interventions for maximizing the nutrition security of their population." See WHO, "Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Childhood Overweight Policy Brief," 2014, 6. WHO estimates that the rate of exclusive breastfeeding needs to increase approximately 20 percent/year to reach the 2025 WHO Nutrition Target. See WHO, "Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Breastfeeding Policy Brief," 2014, 1. To reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5 percent, the relevant WHO policy brief does not identify an annual target to reach the 2025 goal. However, the brief does encourage high-burden countries to "take stock of their current prevalence, projected population growth, underlying causes of wasting and the resources available to address them." See WHO, "Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Wasting Policy Brief," 2014, 1.

⁴³ WHO, "Global Targets Tracking Tool," 2017, <http://www.who.int/nutrition/trackingtool/en/>.

⁴⁴ UK Department for International Development, "Nutrition for Growth: Beating Hunger through Business and Science," June 8, 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nutrition-for-growth-beating-hunger-through-business-and-science>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

New Research Identifies Key Determinants of Childhood Undernutrition in 2015

In a research paper published in *World Development*, authors Lisa C. Smith and Lawrence Haddad analyzed data from 1970 to 2012 in 116 countries looking at the key drivers reducing childhood stunting.⁴⁶ In the paper, “Reducing Child Undernutrition: Past Drivers and Priorities for the Post-MDG Era,” the authors provide governments and international development agencies with clear guidance on the determinants of child undernutrition. To accelerate reductions in undernutrition in the coming decades, they conclude that strategies in nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programs should focus on “improving health environments through increasing access to safe water and sanitation . . . improving the quality of caring practices for children through increasing women’s education and promoting gender equality, including women’s empowerment; and increasing food security by ensuring adequate availability of food at the national level and sufficient nutritional quality of that food.”⁴⁷ They also found that income growth and governance played essential facilitating roles.⁴⁸

September 2015: UN General Assembly Calls for an End to All Forms of Malnutrition

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed Resolution A/RES/70/1 resolving to “end hunger and to achieve food security as a matter of priority and to end all forms of malnutrition.”⁴⁹ The resolution also addressed SDG 2 to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture,” and set specific goals under five provisions addressing the need to end all forms of malnutrition.⁵⁰ Under the five provisions, by the year 2030, UNGA resolved to:

1. End hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round;
2. End all forms of malnutrition (including achieving the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets);
3. Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers;
4. Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices;
5. Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Lisa Smith and Lawrence Haddad, “Reducing Child Undernutrition: Past Drivers and Priorities for the Post-MDG Era,” *World Development* 68 (April 2015): 180–200, http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0305750X14003726/1-s2.0-S0305750X14003726-main.pdf?_tid=eb5a55a8-252b-11e7-9901-00000aab0f02&acdnat=1492625802_54fc57aa5d7dcf0c3fa1d891f8c208a3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ UN General Assembly, “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” October 21, 2015, A/Res/70/01, paragraph 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

In 2016, the Clarion Call: UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016–2025

On April 1, 2016, UNGA announced the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, from 2016 to 2025. This reiterates the call to end all forms of malnutrition as established in the Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁵²

⁵² IFPRI, *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, 4.

02

U.S. Government Instruments Working to End Global Malnutrition: A Brief Look

To better understand where the GNCP fits within the arsenal of U.S. global nutrition efforts, this chapter provides a brief look at the relevant, current U.S. government initiatives and strategies and at the new food security law—all dedicated to achieving the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets; SDG 2; and other U.S. goals established to help end global malnutrition.

In the early 1950s, the United States began supporting food security and related nutrition interventions around the world. At that time, then-president Harry Truman started funding land grant colleges (through the Technical Cooperation Administration, or TCA) to fund agriculture, science, and engineering education at universities abroad.⁵³ In July 1954, then-president Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Agricultural Trade Development Act (Pub. L. 480) (later named Food for Peace by President John F. Kennedy) to export U.S. surplus agricultural products to countries facing dire food shortages. To this day, Congress annually appropriates funding to continue Food for Peace—a program administered by USAID.⁵⁴

The ongoing U.S. commitment to ending food insecurity and malnutrition in developing countries is reflected consistently in the range of programs and strategies in place. Many would say that global nutrition programs began their ascent as a development priority in the United States with the 2010 launch of the presidential initiative Feed the Future. Today, nutrition interventions are becoming increasingly important in U.S. government initiatives to improve global health, education, and economic growth outcomes. In addition, the government is actively involved in several international campaigns to end global malnutrition, including the Second International Conference on Nutrition, Nutrition for Growth, and SUN.

In addition to Feed the Future, U.S. government mechanisms to promote global nutrition programs include USAID's intra-agency *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025*; the June 2016 GNCP (the subject of this paper); the July 2016 Global Food Security Act; and the September 2016 *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021*. These five instruments exemplify why U.S. nutrition officers and other experts are now, more than ever, working closely together. While they continue to work side by side with their traditional health colleagues (on nutrition-specific programs), today they also are joining forces on nutrition-

⁵³ One of the first TCA projects worked with the Ethiopian government to set up an agricultural college in Alemaya, Ethiopia. In the ensuing 40 years, until 1991, the U.S. government worked with 43 developing countries to establish similar land grant colleges to teach agriculture, science, and engineering. See Janet Ballantyne and Maureen Dugan, *Fifty Years in USAID, Stories from the Front Lines* (Arlington, VA: Arlington Hall Press, 2012), <http://adst.org/publications/memoirs-and-occasional-papers/fifty-years-in-usaid/>.

⁵⁴ FoodAid.org, <http://foodaid.org/resources/the-history-of-food-aid/>.

sensitive programs with agriculturalists; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) specialists; economists; and environmentalists.

Feed the Future: Well into Its Seventh Year

Feed the Future, the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative, was launched in 2010 as the result of the 2009 G8 Summit commitment. At the summit, the United States agreed to promote global agricultural development, improved nutrition, and food security with

In 2015 alone, Feed the Future programs boosted the incomes of over 9 million families by more than \$800 million.

an initial pledge of \$3.5 billion over three years. This whole-of-government presidential initiative includes 11 interagency partners⁵⁵ working in 19 focus countries.⁵⁶ Programs aim to sustainably reduce global hunger and poverty by accelerating inclusive agricultural

sector growth, and improving nutritional status, especially of women and children. The initiative has seen marked success since its inception. In 2015 alone, Feed the Future programs boosted the incomes of over 9 million families by more than \$800 million. Nutrition interventions reached nearly 18 million children under five, and childhood stunting dropped between 12 and 32 percent in some locations where Feed the Future works.⁵⁷

USAID leads Feed the Future implementation through the Bureau for Food Security, but it does not directly control other agencies' funding for the initiative, because each agency's program and spending authorities are uniquely defined. Congress funds Feed the Future through annual appropriations without official statutory authorization. In the 2017 Congressional Budget Justification, the Feed the Future budget request was \$870.8 million, with \$108.5 million for nutrition included in that sum. Other nutrition-related programs that fall under Feed the Future include Food for Peace Title II nonemergency food aid, within USAID/DCHA; and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program (under USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service).

USAID's Bureaus and Offices Align in the *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025*

USAID's *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025* brings together relevant bureaus and offices to "scale up effective, integrated nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions,

⁵⁵ USAID, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Commerce, Peace Corps, Millennium Challenge Corporation, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Treasury, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Africa Development Foundation, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

⁵⁶ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Additional countries may be included under aligned and regional programs.

⁵⁷ Feed the Future, "A Food-Secure 2030: A Global Vision & Call to Action," September 2016, https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/A_Food-Secure_2030_0.pdf.

programs, and systems across humanitarian and development contexts.”⁵⁸ The strategy includes joint efforts from USAID’s Bureau for Global Health (the Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition and the Office of HIV/AIDS), the Bureau for Food Security, and DCHA (the Office of Food for Peace and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance). This is USAID’s first multisectoral strategy dedicated to global nutrition, written to inform (not to direct) nutrition programming. It is meant to encourage USAID missions to integrate proposed nutrition objectives in order to achieve development goals with existing appropriations. The strategy is an *intra*-agency agreement that aligns its goals with the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets.⁵⁹

The U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021: Building Cohesion among U.S. Government Nutrition Experts

As the subject of this paper, the GNCP is considered at length in Chapter 3, but a brief review is included here to situate the plan within the range of current U.S. government global nutrition plans and strategies.

Through improved coordination, the plan drafters hope to maximize the use of government resources...

The GNCP sits among the U.S. government’s global nutrition instruments with the shared and overarching goal to contribute to international efforts to end global malnutrition. Released in June 2016, the plan follows Feed the Future (in

2010) and USAID’s *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy* (in 2014) and is meant to enhance the abilities of the U.S. government nutrition officers and experts using a whole-of-government approach to design and implement global nutrition programs more effectively. The plan is not tied to specific programming goals with set indicators to measure outcomes, impact, and learning, nor is it tied to specific appropriations with guaranteed funding levels. Rather, the plan works within existing funding levels and focuses on building the internal, interagency cohesion needed to implement the U.S. government’s global nutrition programs and strategies.

The interagency partners participating in the GNCP are working together specifically to improve communication and collaboration and to link research to program implementation. Through improved coordination, the plan drafters hope to maximize the use of government resources (human and financial), which, in turn, will accelerate progress toward the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets, SDG 2, and other global nutrition goals. Because the GNCP is a unique, volunteer initiative, it will require the ongoing commitment of its interagency partners to succeed. Does it have the right combination of structure and guidance to maximize U.S. government resources? See Chapter 3 for a detailed analysis.

⁵⁸ USAID, *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

The Global Food Security Act of 2016: Promoting Improved Nutrition in Developing Countries

Congress adopted the Global Food Security Act of 2016 with strong bipartisan support, codifying and continuing the global hunger and food security initiative first launched in 2010 under Feed the Future.⁶⁰ The act directs foreign assistance programs to use a “comprehensive, strategic approach . . . to reduce global poverty and hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, promote inclusive, sustainable agricultural-led economic growth, improve nutritional outcomes, especially for women and children, [and to] build resilience among vulnerable populations.”⁶¹

The act includes three global nutrition policy objectives. Section 2(a) notes that programs, activities, and initiatives should work to:

- Accelerate inclusive, agricultural-led economic growth that reduces global poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, particularly among women and children;⁶²
- Improve the nutritional status of women and children, with a focus on reducing child stunting, including through the promotion of highly nutritious foods, diet diversification, and nutritional behaviors that improve maternal and child health;⁶³ and
- Align with and leverage broader U.S. strategies and investments in trade, economic growth, science and technology, agricultural research and extension, maternal and child health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene.⁶⁴

Under the act, Congress states that assistance should be coordinated using a whole-of-government approach that includes 11 named federal departments and agencies.⁶⁵ These are the same departments and agencies represented in Feed the Future.

U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy—For a World Free from Hunger, Malnutrition, and Extreme Poverty

The *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021* (GFSS), a requirement of the Global Food Security Act, was released in September 2016. It is a whole-of-government approach to sustainably reduce global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty through three objectives: 1) inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth; 2) strengthened resilience among people and systems; and 3) a well-nourished population, especially among

⁶⁰ U.S. Global Food Security Act of 2016, Public Law No: 114-195 (07/20/2016).

⁶¹ Pub. L. No: 114-195.

⁶² Pub. L. No: 114-195, § 2(a)(1).

⁶³ Pub. L. No: 114-195, § 2(a)(5).

⁶⁴ Pub. L. No: 114-195, § 2(a)(6).

⁶⁵ The term “relevant Federal departments and agencies” means USAID, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Peace Corps, Office of the United States Trade Representative, U.S. African Development Foundation, U.S. Geological Survey, and any other department or agency specified by the president for purposes of this section. Pub. L. No: 114-195, § 3(9).

women and children. Objective 3 of the GFSS is dedicated to global nutrition interventions: “We are committed to improving nutrition to enhance health, productivity, and human potential and to save lives, as reflected in our U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan for 2016–2021.”⁶⁶ The GFSS also has raised the importance of WASH interventions to target the underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition. Interventions will work to improve nutritional status and prevent environmental enteropathy through access to clean and safe drinking water, nutritious food, and sanitation services.⁶⁷

For FY 2017, Congress authorized \$1 billion in appropriations to the U.S. Department of State and USAID to implement the GFSS.⁶⁸ USAID’s Bureau for Food Security will lead implementation, providing the resources and technical and organizational leadership to coordinate global programming. They will work closely with other areas of USAID, including DCHA; the Bureau for Global Health; the Center for Resilience; the Global Development Lab; and the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment.⁶⁹

Target countries in the GFSS are not limited in number and will be selected based on established criteria.⁷⁰ The selection process will not automatically include the 19 focus countries that make up Feed the Future, although some countries may be included in both programs.

⁶⁶ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021* (Washington, DC: USAID, September 2016), 22, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USG-Global-Food-Security-Strategy-2016.pdf>.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Pub. L. No: 114-195, § 5(b).

⁶⁹ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021*.

⁷⁰ Selection criteria include consideration of level of need; potential for agricultural-led growth, opportunities for partnership, opportunities for regional economic integration, U.S. government resource availability, and government commitment to food security investment and policy reform.

03

The U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021

The Plan's Purpose

The purpose of the GNCP is to “strengthen the impact of the many diverse nutrition investments across the U.S. government through better communication, collaboration, and linking research to program implementation.”⁷¹ The hope of the plan is that improved collaboration will lead to a whole greater than the sum of its parts. As the plan drafters reasoned: “Nutrition is a clear multi-sector priority that requires sustained attention in the coming years from multiple U.S. government actors. Where resources are limited, better coordination will allow previously dispersed efforts to build upon collective lessons learned and achieve stronger results.”⁷² With combined use of each agency’s nutrition experts, available funds, and programming authorities, together with nutrition-related research, the plan expects to “maximize its support to country-led programs, continue its global leadership and partnerships, and generate, share, and apply knowledge and evidence in the nutrition sector.”⁷³

Evolving with the Nutrition Landscape

The GNCP is a “living document” that will evolve as U.S. government global nutrition strategies and goals evolve.⁷⁴ The plan stresses its intention to inform nutrition actions without guaranteeing funding levels beyond what is already planned. Membership is voluntary and open to technical advisers engaged in global nutrition programming from headquarters and in the field. Currently, active participants include USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation; Peace Corps; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (including the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention); U.S. Department of State (including the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator); and U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Many of these agencies and departments are already working to realize the U.S. government’s commitment to the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets and are also actively involved in implementing U.S. initiatives, such as Feed the Future, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. The plan does not identify specific countries for nutrition interventions, but stresses that programs

⁷¹ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021* (Washington, DC: USAID, June 2016), 9, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/nutritionCoordinationPlan_web-508.pdf.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10. Note: The plan drafters do not expect to make any considerable changes in the coming five years.

should continue in the target countries of the U.S. government’s global health programs and Feed the Future initiative.

The Fundamental Agenda

To improve communication, collaboration, and to link research to program implementation, the plan serves as an internal, administrative handbook with seven mandated coordination actions:

1. Create a permanent, government-wide Global Nutrition Technical Working Group;
2. Release an annual summary of interagency progress;
3. Produce a report (every five years) on U.S. government contributions toward the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets and other U.S. government global nutrition commitments;
4. Develop a process to gather and report interagency information on annual U.S. government nutrition resource expenditures;
5. Form a “Science Sub-Working Group” to link research to nutrition programs;
6. Make U.S. government nutrition data openly available;
7. Establish POCs within each U.S. government agency participating in the GNCP and at U.S. posts where more than one U.S. government agency is engaged in nutrition-related programming.⁷⁵

These actions, if realized, have the potential to create a strong community of practice and to form the connective tissue needed to coordinate program interventions and to utilize nutrition resources more efficiently and effectively. But the plan expects more. By maximizing the impact of government actions and investments (from U.S. headquarters to U.S. embassies), the GNCP expects to accelerate progress toward meeting the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets, SDG 2, and other U.S. government global commitments.⁷⁶ For the plan to realize these higher-level goals, the drafters included specific opportunities and mechanisms for coordination, which are reviewed below.

Opportunities and Mechanisms for Coordination: Informing Nutrition Actions

The GNCP’s opportunities and mechanisms for coordination present participating U.S. government agencies and departments with a hearty menu of aspirational nutrition interventions.⁷⁷ The plan first notes 19 key U.S. government actions that are contributing to each of the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets.⁷⁸ It then offers six illustrative, technical focus areas in

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁸ The 19 key U.S. government actions can be found at USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 12–13.

which agencies and departments should consider working together. They include food fortification, nutrition information systems, food safety, the first 1,000 days, nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases, and HIV and nutrition. Under these six focus areas, the plan recommends 53 possible Collaborations for Enhanced Global Impact with a table of priority activities.⁷⁹

The GNCP also establishes three priority approaches to improve interagency coordination (to leverage each other’s work, strengthen collective accountability, and maximize the impact of international actions on nutrition).⁸⁰ Approaches should:

- *Support country-led efforts*: assisting host governments and communities to realize their nutrition-related policies, strategies, and processes;
- *Promote leadership and partnership*: facilitating whole-of-government communication and collaboration among U.S. government agencies at headquarters and at the country level; leading and supporting global nutrition initiatives, policies, and guidelines; and working directly with host-country governments; and
- *Generate, share, and apply knowledge and evidence*: ensuring that policy recommendations and nutrition programming are evidence-based and use the highest-quality scientific data (derived openly and objectively); and that “relevant U.S. government nutrition actors...more systematically share research findings, best practices, and lessons learned.”⁸¹

A Volunteer Partnership

A noteworthy and unusual aspect of the GNCP—both its strength and its potential weakness—is its evolution and design as a volunteer initiative. Led by USAID, the plan was born of the combined vision and voluntary efforts of eight U.S. government agencies and departments committed to accelerating progress toward their respective global nutrition commitments.⁸² This dedicated group acted of their own volition and met routinely over a three-year period,

We needed concrete steps to make the most of taxpayer dollars.

without the formal, governing mandate that often motivates the birth of most new government plans and strategies.

In discussing the GNCP’s evolution with its drafters, a recurring theme centered on the desire (and need) to improve interagency collaboration, to create a healthy, volunteer, community of practice, and to leverage resources. As one drafter said, “We needed concrete steps to make the most of taxpayer dollars. The plan allows us to maximize resources and to take comparative advantage of the capacities, people, and expertise we have among the interagency partners. If, for example, the National Institutes of Health are working on a research

⁷⁹ The list of 53 possible U.S. government activities can be found at USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 21–25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 12, 17.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.

project on nutrition, we want to know how we can use that knowledge.”⁸³ While many noted that ad hoc (whole-of-government) communication had been occurring for years between and among the agencies working on global nutrition, the plan solidifies these working relationships (how they work together) and identifies technical areas for cooperation in what some have called a de facto memorandum of understanding. It’s a tool to “allow us to do our jobs better.”⁸⁴

The Six Technical Focus Areas: Targeted and Flexible

Food fortification, nutrition information systems, food safety, the first 1,000 days, nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases, and HIV and nutrition: the GNCP drafters identified these six technical focus areas as opportunities to improve the global impact of U.S. government nutrition investments. The plan is careful to stress that these focus areas are not exhaustive nor are they directive. They were chosen based on the shared interest of two or more agencies and a desire to increase collaboration in these areas. They are meant as examples of U.S. government activities where interagency coordination may enhance results and impact.⁸⁵ As one drafter observed: “We knew we needed to create an action-oriented document with a shared vision on possible, tangible outcomes. So we considered the technical areas where we had forward movement, where expertise, funding, and field programs already existed, and where interagency cooperation was already happening.”⁸⁶

The group also wanted to draw on existing available resources. For example, in the area of food fortification, USAID, USDA, and the Centers for Disease Control were already working on the Food Fortification Initiative, a public-private network that aims to expand fortification of wheat, maize, and rice globally.⁸⁷ As another drafter noted, “If we can do a good job on these—and these are great to start with—it will help us learn how to work together; it’s going to be a learning experience over the next couple of years.”⁸⁸

Given the scope of, and ongoing need for, global nutrition programming, the drafters of the GNCP recognized that the six technical focus areas would have to evolve over the life of the plan. Two years from now, they said, new thematic areas will evolve because the plan is really a community of practice. This flexible format will be valuable in allowing nutrition programs to respond to global needs, especially as research and learning continue to refine nutrition interventions.

⁸³ Key informant interview, January 12, 2017.

⁸⁴ Key informant interview, January 11, 2017.

⁸⁵ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 21.

⁸⁶ Key informant interview, January 11, 2017.

⁸⁷ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 33.

⁸⁸ Key informant interview, January 17, 2017.

04

The Plan Proves Promising

Holding Themselves Accountable: The Seven Coordination Actions

The interagency partners hold themselves accountable for seven “coordination actions” that will serve as the “backbone” for collaborative global nutrition programming.⁸⁹ This, then, is where the substantive deliverables of the plan are found. In this chapter, the report lists the coordination actions, noting progress and other comments where applicable.

In fairness to the TWG and all those actively involved in the GNCP, the interagency partners had just begun to execute the initial stages of the plan at the time of this writing, and the coordinating actions had yet to be launched. In the coming months and years, participating agencies and departments have committed to realize the actions that follow:

1. Create a permanent, government-wide Global Nutrition Technical Working Group to serve as a leader and convener for action and information-sharing regarding U.S. government global nutrition programs.

The TWG will include a secretariat that will rotate annually among the participating agencies and departments. Technical advisers will serve as members in the TWG and should include field office representation as well as headquarter officials. The TWG is expected to meet three times a year and to create sub-working groups to tackle specific tasks. The plan requires the TWG to develop terms of reference and a process for monitoring and reporting progress.⁹⁰

In late 2016, the TWG held its first meeting with approximately 35 active members representing the U.S. government interagency partners. Three cochairs are heading up the group in its first year: two USDA officials and one Peace Corps official. As of early January 2017, six sub-working groups (one for each of the six technical focus areas) had already formed and were working on drafting their respective terms. A seventh sub-working group also was established to oversee coordination of the plan with the GFSS. The seven sub-working groups plan to meet monthly.

2. Release an annual summary of interagency progress under the *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan*.

This summary focuses on annual progress in coordination efforts and to include “targets of opportunity, priorities, and plans for the coming year, and success stories from the previous

⁸⁹ USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 10.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

year.”⁹¹ At this point in time, it is not clear who will oversee this process or what level of monitoring and reporting will be conducted.

3. Produce a U.S. government report at the end of a 5-year cycle on U.S. government contributions toward the World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets and other U.S. government global nutrition commitments.

The report will highlight U.S. government nutrition investments and commitments toward achievement of the WHA 2025 Nutrition Targets and to track results based on the Nutrition for Growth 2013 Compact. The GNCP also intends to link this five-year report to the Global Nutrition Report.⁹²

4. Develop a process to gather and report interagency information on annual U.S. government nutrition resource expenditures.

...agencies report budget data in different formats and may not single out the nutrition components of their program.

To demonstrate U.S. government transparency in resource allocation, the GNCP intends to create an interagency financial database that will record annual disbursements for global nutrition programs and activities. The plan notes the difficulty

in tracking expenditures since agencies report budget data in different formats and may not single out the nutrition components of their program.⁹³ Currently, the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) tracks funding for State Department and USAID global nutrition programs, but this excludes any financial reporting from other implementing agencies involved in the GNCP.

Outside of this official reporting within F, many of the U.S. government’s global nutrition agencies and departments are tracking and reporting transactional data (nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive obligations and disbursements) such as official development assistance (ODA) to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. These data are also used for the annual Global Nutrition Report.⁹⁴

U.S. agencies currently reporting ODA in support of nutrition investments include U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Health and Human

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ The data is classified using the purpose codes in the DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS). See OECD, “Purpose Codes: sector classification,” <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/purposecodessectorclassification.htm>. Nutrition-sensitive programs are assigned either a 100 percent coefficient, for example in programs that are directly associated with nutrition-sensitive outcomes, including basic drinking water supply and sanitation and direct feeding through emergency food aid. Other nutrition-sensitive programs are assigned a 25 percent coefficient to account for the percent of funds spent to achieve nutrition outcomes. These nutrition-sensitive codes cover health policy and administrative management, basic health care, infectious disease control, health education, health personnel development, reproductive health care, women’s equality organizations and institutions, agricultural development, food crop production, livestock, agricultural extension, agricultural research, and fishery development.

Services, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of the Interior, Inter-American Foundation, Millennium Challenge Corporation, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, USAID, Peace Corps, African Development Foundation, and U.S. Department of Commerce.

The GNCP participants plan to utilize the current tracking methodology, which will be refined as needed to increase the accuracy and reliability of nutrition resource tracking. “Also, the USG is facilitating work with other nutrition donors to refine and harmonize methodologies among and across donors in order to help ensure that nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive investments can be reported transparently on a consistent basis.”⁹⁵

5. Form a U.S. Government Global Nutrition Implementation Science Sub-Working Group that can interact with the existing Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research (ICHNR) and share best practices to link research to nutrition programs.

A fundamental, interagency goal of the GNCP is to translate nutrition evidence into practice, thereby improving nutrition outcomes. Forming the Science Sub-Working Group directly addresses this goal and encourages the relevant agencies and departments (e.g., USDA and National Institutes of Health) to share their knowledge and best practices with their global nutrition counterparts.

6. Make U.S. government nutrition data openly available in accordance with the U.S. government open-data initiative.

This coordination action will be important to implement, especially since making open data publicly available is a legal requirement of U.S. government agencies. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Circular M-13-13, “Open Data Policy—Managing Information as an Asset,” requires all U.S. government departments and agencies “to manage information as an asset throughout its life cycle to promote openness and interoperability, and properly safeguard systems and information.”⁹⁶ Making GNCP-related data publicly available is likely to be a time-consuming and expensive exercise because data stewards must ensure the legality of release and the removal of all personally identifiable information before data can be published. They must also consider, among other things, potential security issues stemming from inadequate protection of privacy.⁹⁷ It is not clear how the GNCP interagency partners will lead efforts to provide “clean” data and how these agencies will afford the associated costs.

Currently, USAID’s implementing partners in global nutrition are required to collect open data as a standard deliverable within their agreements or contracts. How plan participants will

⁹⁵ Per a U.S. government report explaining the resource tracking methodology. “U.S. Government Methodology for Tracking Nutrition Investments for the Global Nutrition Report 2015” (unpublished document shared with author).

⁹⁶ Office of Management and Budget, “Open Data Policy – Managing Information as an Asset,” Memorandum M-13-13, May 9, 2013. Note also USAID’s Automated Directives System 579, on *Development Data*, establishes the policy directives, required procedures, and roles and responsibilities to make USAID data publicly available. This includes data on strategic planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of USAID’s programs. Under ADS 579.2(f), contracting officers (COs) and agreement officers (AOs) “are responsible for incorporating clauses and provisions into contracts, grants, cooperative agreements (CAs), interagency agreements, and other implementing instruments to instruct implementing partners that they must submit Datasets created or collected with USAID funding to the DDL.”

⁹⁷ OMB M-13-13, § 4.

aggregate this data across programs and activities will be important to address in order to make the data accessible and useful.

7. Establish points of contact within each U.S. government agency participating in the *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan* and at each international U.S. post with more than one U.S. government agency engaged in nutrition-related programming.

According to the GNCP, each interagency partner is expected to name a POC from their head office and also to name a POC at U.S. posts where more than one U.S. government agency is working on nutrition programs or activities. These POCs in the field are expected to communicate with the TWG and to promote and coordinate country-led nutrition programming.

The Promising Plan

The GNCP is an impressive volunteer effort with the potential to improve whole-of-government collaboration. But the plan is in its very early days of operation. The interagency partners will need at least a year or more of dedicated effort before the TWG, sub-working groups, and nutrition POCs (in the field) find an operational rhythm and a collegial community of practice. Once these are established, joint global nutrition initiatives may begin to emerge and the latest findings of global nutrition research could work their way into new programs—or not. Given the volunteer approach of the plan, its success will hinge on the continued commitment of the interagency members in Washington and on their willingness to work closely with the nutrition POCs working in overseas posts. Also important will be the backing of senior leadership within the relevant U.S. government agencies and departments and the bipartisan support of Congress. The point is: it is too soon to tell whether the GNCP will become a worthwhile whole-of-government practice or whether the plan will wither once this unique group of devoted nutrition experts and officers disperse.

What we can see, however, is that the GNCP's framework, even in its nascent stages, proves promising. The positive aspects of the plan include:

It is too soon to tell whether the GNCP will become a worthwhile whole-of-government practice or whether the plan will wither once this unique group of devoted nutrition experts and officers disperse.

Good timing: The GNCP is launching at an opportune time. Right now, global nutrition programs have momentum within USAID and within the greater U.S. government. Bipartisan support continues to see the value in funding nutrition programs as an

important component of global food security. The Global Food Security Act and subsequent Global Food Security Strategy have codified nutrition as a fundamental component of food security.⁹⁸ In this positive climate, the GNCP may find the momentum and support it needs to ramp up and build the interagency rapport that is fundamental to its success.

⁹⁸ Pub. L. No: 114-195 (07/20/2016), § 2(a)(1) and § 2(a)(5).

The timing may also be fortunate in the face of foreign assistance budget cuts. Since the plan is not tied to funding levels, the interagency partners have the flexibility to work on global nutrition programming regardless of funding streams. This, then, might be the plan's moment to shine—when the interagency partners will demonstrate that they are equipped to do more with even less—maximizing the use of available global nutrition resources.

The lauded whole-of-government approach: The GNCP structure embodies a whole-of-government approach, capitalizing on the combined resources and collaborative efforts of the interagency partnerships. If successful, the plan could serve as a model for other U.S. agencies to emulate. Leaders have been heralding the whole-of-government approach for many years. One of its earliest manifestations can be seen in the Global AIDS Act, which Congress passed in May 2003. The law gave then-president George W. Bush the authority to create PEPFAR.⁹⁹

Initiatives since then have incorporated a whole-of-government approach, including Feed the Future in 2010¹⁰⁰ and the Global Food Security Act of 2016. Section 2(b) of the act stresses the importance of the approach to fully utilize the unique capabilities of each relevant federal department and agency. The 2016 OECD/DAC peer review also recently recommended that the United States “streamline its procedures across government departments to achieve more effective and efficient whole-of-government programming.”¹⁰¹

Smaller agencies and departments have a seat at the global nutrition table: The increased interagency rapport among the GNCP partners has had the unexpected benefit of giving smaller agencies and departments a seat at the global nutrition table. They have a voice and are more involved in the evolution of global nutrition programming. As one participant said, “There is much more collaboration now on nutrition activities due in part to a greater visibility between our (smaller) agency and our larger sister agencies in Washington. Also, at the field level, we are able to access colleagues through the missions for technical assistance and training. But the collaboration goes both ways: as a small, grassroots agency, we have insights into cultural and community dynamics that affect programming. Greater communication gives our larger sister agencies access to that level of information.”¹⁰²

Complementarity of expertise creates a strong community of practice: The interagency participants of the GNCP are technical professionals who are passionate about the work they do. Given the multisectoral (nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive) approach embodied in the plan, they represent a wide swath of complementary technical expertise with over 50 content experts participating. Through the GNCP, they are building stronger technical bonds, solidifying relationships across the government, and coming together to create a viable community of practice. Plan participants have said that the collaborative process has proven valuable already.

⁹⁹ Pub. L. No: 108-25.

¹⁰⁰ In September 2010, this approach was reinforced through Presidential Policy Directive 6, when then-President Barack Obama elevated development as a “key pillar of U.S. foreign policy” and encouraged a whole-of-government approach to “harness development capabilities spread across government in support of common objectives. National Security Staff, “Presidential Policy Directive 6/PPD-6, U.S. Global Development Policy,” September 22, 2010, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/ppd/ppd-6.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ OECD Development Assistance Committee, “OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: United States 2016,” December 16, 2016, 19, <http://www.oecd.org/unitedstates/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-united-states-2016-9789264266971-en.htm>.

¹⁰² Key informant interview, January 10, 2017.

This can be seen in changes to USDA’s McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which is increasing its nutrition focus and working with USAID to modify its monitoring and evaluation plans. As one participant explained, “We now we have a model to prevent and address malnutrition that is much more realistic than we’ve ever had before.”¹⁰³ Another added, “if we have a question, we know who we can talk to. We can get together, discuss, explore and make interventions in collaboration.”¹⁰⁴ In addition, because the

The substantial expertise available through the GNCP in Washington and through the nutrition points of contact at U.S. posts should translate into increased support for nutrition at the country level.

plan is not tied to a set appropriation (like PEPFAR), participants are not vying for a share of a finite pot of funds. Absent the stress of competition, they feel freer to collaborate.

power to assemble the TWG over timely topics and to increase traction within their respective agencies and departments. Collectively, the GNCP participants can package global nutrition with a unified message and a stronger voice.

This strong community of practice also has given participants convening

At the country level, POCs will promote nutrition programs: The substantial expertise available through the GNCP in Washington and through the nutrition POCs at U.S. posts should translate into increased support for nutrition at the country level. The POCs will be integrated into the process and will be encouraged to engage with senior officials at U.S. posts. As such, the POCs should have a stronger voice to insert strategic, global nutrition programs and activities into the State/USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategies, which are developed at post, and from which program funding requests are made. Moreover, the designated POCs will serve as liaisons for other U.S. government agencies and departments implementing nutrition programs at post. This, in effect, will create satellite communities of practice that will feed into the GNCP in Washington.

Built-in flexibility leaves room for expansion: Because the GNCP membership is open to all relevant U.S. government agencies and departments working on nutrition (in the United States and overseas) and because the plan is open to expanding its technical focus areas, it can respond to the evolving global nutrition arena and to concerns and priorities going forward. The plan can expand to include and engage U.S. legislators, for example, to promote increased awareness and garner support for global nutrition programs and funding. Also, because the plan is not tied directly to funding, it can continue to function even if global nutrition budgets are cut.

¹⁰³ Key informant interview, January 17, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Key informant interview, January 12, 2017.

05

Challenges and Recommendations

The GNCP is operating with two fundamental roles: 1) as an interagency, administrative handbook to strengthen communication and collaboration and to link research to program implementation; and 2) as an aspirational guide to strengthen the impact of U.S. government global nutrition programs and to meet higher-level international nutrition targets. This chapter considers both roles and the inherent challenges for the plan and its participants. It also considers the plan's role in connection with global nutrition implementing partners (working in the field) and offers recommendations for collective consideration.

Challenge: Select Focus Areas Omit Dietary Diversity and Over-nutrition

Two important technical components of global nutrition include dietary diversity and over-nutrition. Yet these are not identified among the six technical focus areas within the GNCP. Plan drafters recognize the importance of these issues in addressing malnutrition and assert that dietary diversity will be well covered within the first 1,000 days sub-working group and that over-nutrition will be included in the noncommunicable diseases sub-working group. Given the important contributions that these two technical focus areas can make to ending global malnutrition, this analysis suggests they remain distinct priorities.

Dietary diversity: Today, nutrition-sensitive agriculture is increasingly prevalent as a sustainable development tool and the U.S. government has made some inroads through Feed the Future and Food for Peace. Incorporating nutrition elements into traditional agriculture programs enhances the value of agricultural outputs to bring more nutritious foods to market. Such proven interventions include biofortification (breeding nutrients into seeds),¹⁰⁵ increasing access to biofortified seeds; adding micronutrients to fertilizer to increase the nutritional density of crops; or ensuring that cold storage systems are available to preserve the nutritional value of crops from farm to table.¹⁰⁶ Both nutritionists and agriculturalists have critical contributions to make, yet these experts often work in silos. Nutritionists focus on micronutrients as a solution to malnutrition and do not venture into food production. Agriculturalists focus on food production and supply chains often without considering nutrition. Nutritionists work on behalf of

¹⁰⁵ Though the plan does include biofortification as a focus area, dietary diversity initiatives could include a wider range of potential interagency programs and activities in addition to biofortification.

¹⁰⁶ Bonnie McClafferty, with Jocelyn Zuckerman, *Cultivating Nutritious Food Systems: A Snapshot Report* (Washington, DC: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, November 2014), <http://www.gainhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/GAIN-Snapshot-Report-agriculture-nutrition-FINAL.pdf>.

consumers (the demand side) while agriculturalist work on behalf of the growers/producers (the supply side).¹⁰⁷

Over-Nutrition: The *Global Nutrition Report 2016* notes the growing disease burden caused by over-nutrition: “Obesity and overweight, rising in every region and nearly every country, are now a staggering global challenge. The number of children under 5 who are overweight is approaching the number who suffer from wasting.”¹⁰⁸ The GNCP recognizes the health challenges presented by over-nutrition¹⁰⁹ and the importance of programs to combat it: “Ensuring good nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life is the foundation for reducing risk of both under-nutrition and over-nutrition and nutrition-related chronic diseases later in life.”¹¹⁰ The plan states that two key U.S. government actions¹¹¹ address the WHA target of no increase in child overweight, but it falls short of identifying over-nutrition as a focus area. This is also a technical domain in which domestically focused expertise may add particular value and insight to global nutrition programs.

Recommendation: The plan drafters identified six global nutrition focus areas based on the shared interest of two or more agencies and a desire to increase collaboration within them. Given the importance of nutrition-sensitive agriculture to improve health and socioeconomic outcomes and given the alarming disease burden due to overnutrition, the GNCP is missing an opportunity to create new synergies where cutting-edge programming is needed. While too many priorities will dilute the plan’s focus, developing exploratory partnerships on targeted topics is one of its liberties. Given its flexibility, then, **the U.S. government should consider adding two technical focus areas—dietary diversity and over-nutrition—to bring more nutrient-rich crops from farm to table and to address the disease burden born of over-nutrition, including other noncommunicable diseases.**

Challenge: Can a Volunteer Initiative Become an Institutionalized Process?

At this early stage in the GNCP’s existence, it is too soon to tell whether senior leaders within the relevant U.S. government agencies and departments will recognize the plan’s mandate to work across agencies and whether they will give their nutrition officers the authority (and time) to participate as active members. It is also too soon to tell whether the participants will have the

¹⁰⁷ The U.S. government’s Feed the Future Initiative understands the importance of designing agricultural programs to include nutrition objectives. According to a 2014 Feed the Future factsheet, “The potential for agricultural development and enhanced food systems to improve nutrition is well-recognized—primarily through providing greater access to diverse, nutritious diets. While agricultural growth is associated with greater reductions in stunting than nonagricultural growth, the full potential of agriculture to improve the nutrition of vulnerable farming families, as well as the general population, has yet to be realized.”

¹⁰⁸ IFPRI, *Global Nutrition Report 2016*, xix.

¹⁰⁹ The GNCP states that “malnutrition, both under-nutrition and over-nutrition, not only restricts the attainment of human potential and productivity, but also poses a high burden of social and economic consequences to individuals, families, communities, and nations.” USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 3, 15.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹¹ The two key U.S. government actions include 1) ensuring closer interagency collaboration when responding to foreign government requests to learn about preventing nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases through improved nutrition; and 2) promoting and supporting optimal infant and young child feeding practices as part of essential nutrition actions and measure minimum acceptable diet scores in a minimum of 20 countries. *Ibid.*, 13.

staying power to integrate the seven coordination actions into their routine workloads. What we can see, however, is that the GNCP drafters have demonstrated their commitment to the plan; they volunteered their time over three years to see to its completion. Perhaps, though, this was the result of a unique, driven, and committed group of nutrition experts. What happens as plan participants change over time? Will newcomers in the relevant agencies and departments embrace the plan as an imperative (institutionalized) process as the founders have done? Or will their workloads be overtaken by mandated priorities and new initiatives? As the plan's participants evolve, what can be done to keep this worthwhile, whole-of-government initiative alive?

Recommendation: Even as a volunteer initiative, the GNCP has the potential to become an institutionalized process that cultivates communication and collaboration among its interagency partners. If the seven coordination actions become routine practices, for example, the GNCP may build the momentum it needs to become a viable programming platform. Moreover, the GNCP would benefit from a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan that carefully tracks progress against the seven coordination actions (as specified in Action 1) and against the milestones set in each of the technical sub-working groups. It will also prove valuable to document future interagency initiatives and collaborative efforts to demonstrate the plan's ability to effectively join resources. Also important will be documenting progress toward the WHA 2025 nutrition targets. Because the GNCP will stand as a useful model for other interested U.S. government agencies, monitoring, evaluation, and learning will be important to demonstrate the value of this volunteer, interagency partnership.

To this end, **the GNCP would benefit from a detailed implementation plan that operationalizes the administrative components of the seven coordination actions and clarifies other administrative functions.** For example, the implementation plan could include a clearly defined organizational management structure that would:

- Define roles and responsibilities, benchmarks, and timelines for each of the seven coordination actions and for all other administrative tasks and deliverables under the plan;
- Require every partner agency and department in the plan to dedicate at least one staff person (with a sufficient level of effort) to participate in all relevant plan-related actions and tasks;
- Include terms of reference for the nutrition POCs at U.S. posts and define their authorities and a communication structure (between headquarters and the field as well as across field posts) to promote country-led nutrition efforts and to disseminate research findings;
- Establish decisionmaking rules of procedure, including how the U.S. government will determine the annual appointment for the rotating secretariat;
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to track the seven coordination actions, the milestones set for the technical sub-working groups, future interagency initiatives and collaborative efforts, and progress toward the WHA 2025 nutrition targets.

Challenge: How Should Knowledge be Shared among Implementing Partners and Civil Society Organizations?

Given the rich and evolving global nutrition landscape within the U.S. government today, implementing partners and CSOs would benefit from in-person information exchanges, brown-bag lunches, and brainstorming sessions. The plan recognizes the importance of “maintaining close relationships” with CSOs, noting that they “will be fundamental to ending hunger and achieving our shared nutrition goals.”¹¹² These nutrition specialists have hands-on experience of what does and does not work in the field. In-person exchanges would expand the GNCP’s community of practice to those knowledgeable persons who also share the U.S. government’s interest in global nutrition. They would also give implementing partners and CSOs an interagency forum to raise programming gaps and to brainstorm solutions. Given the GNCP design as a platform for exchange, it stands to reason that the greater global nutrition communities in the United States and overseas would also benefit from opportunities to communicate with their U.S. government counterparts.

Recommendation: To better inform interested U.S. government implementing partners and the greater global nutrition community on the GNCP, the U.S. government should convene an in-depth presentation of the plan to discuss how it fits in with Feed the Future, USAID’s *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025*, and the *U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy: FY 2017–2021*. In addition, **the GNCP should consider establishing a schedule of routine information exchanges with the greater global nutrition communities here in the United States and at U.S. posts.** It also should make available the global POCs list (per Coordination Action 7) to all organizations and companies involved or interested in global nutrition programming.

¹¹² USAID, *U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016–2021*, 11.

About the Author

Carol Conragan is a human rights attorney (licensed in the District of Columbia) and a senior program manager, facilitator, writer, and editor with 20 years of progressively senior leadership experience working in the international development arena. She has designed, directed, and managed country and technical programs for the U.S. government, multilateral and bilateral organizations, and the private sector. Ms. Conragan spent 12 years as a writer and editor in the private sector before becoming a human rights attorney.

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1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
202 887 0200 | www.csis.org