

Agenda Item 17: Maternal infant and young child nutrition

Non-State Actors Constituency Statement Members:

- World Vision International
- International Society of Nephrology
- March of Dimes
- Nutrition International
- Save the Children
- International Rescue Committee
- Micronutrient Forum
- Water Aid
- Global Health Council

We appreciate this report, and the actions described. Progress strengthening nutrition monitoring is welcome to inform nutrition prioritization, investment and accountability. The new SDG indicator focused on prevalence of anemia in adolescents and women aged 15 to 49 years is a benchmark in global prioritization of this debilitating issue for one-third of women and girls globally.

Anemia impairs adolescent girls' physical and cognitive development, increases maternal mortality, and is linked to prematurity and low-birth weight, leading causes of neonatal mortality. Anemia also affects 42% of children under-five. It's estimated that the Covid-19 pandemic causes a further 4.8 million mothers to become anemic.ⁱ

For every \$1 invested in anemia reduction, there is a \$12 return in improved health and productivity. Health systems must realize this investment as part of a continuum of care focused on evidence based, cost-effective interventions at each life stage, culminating in good maternal nutrition and positive newborn outcomes. We recommend the following priorities:

- Normalize micronutrient supplementation for children under-five, adolescent girls, and pregnant women, where anemia is prevalent.
- Establish a global indicator for under-five child anemia.
- Promote screening/prevention of Chronic Kidney Disease to avert the development of anemia.
- Accelerate investment in exclusive breastfeeding, including for the small and sick newborn. In addition to actions on digital marketing, legislate health facility and health actor compliance with the marketing code.
- Resolve to establish a minimum density of 5 nutrition professionals per 100,000 population to provide supportive direction to the health workforce.
- Emphasize inclusion of water, sanitation and hygiene in national nutrition policies.

In closing we recommend the OECD-DAC indicator on nutrition investment reporting to be widely adopted.

ⁱ Osendarp, S., Akuoku, J.K., Black, R.E. et al. The COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate maternal and child undernutrition and child mortality in low- and middle-income countries. *Nat Food* 2, 476–484 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00319-4>