

Introduction

Malnutrition has a high economic and health cost, yet not enough is spent on improving nutrition. Poverty and poor livelihoods are major determinants of malnutrition which results in poor cognitive development, increased morbidity, mortality and economic impacts. Therefore, political commitment and increased investment in nutrition is crucial to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Government of Zimbabwe recognizes this indisputable importance of food and nutrition security as illustrated in its key policy frameworks. Coordination takes place through the Food and Nutrition Security Committees (FNCSs), which are national and sub-national multi-sectoral platforms (MSPs). However, more accountability and tracking of government financial commitments will be crucial to ensure sustainable impact on the key nutrition problems of public health relevance. This increases transparency on how resources for nutrition are spent, and greater accountability for progress made or not made against malnutrition is required.

Based on recent analysis of funding gaps in the nutrition sector, it was noted that most African governments are failing to honour their financial commitments to nutrition. It is against this background that East and Southern civil society alliances commissioned a joint budget analysis exercise aimed at estimating domestic nutrition investment. In general the recommendations of the report urge governments and partners in nutrition to commit in proven interventions to end hunger and under nutrition. In addition a call has been made for African countries to allocate at least 3 % of national budget to nutrition in the next 3 years after the realization that current

Spending on nutrition is proving inadequate to address the malnutrition challenges the continent is facing.

Civil society organisations, businesses, the donor community and governments were urged to conduct financial tracking of all their investments in both nutrition specific and sensitive interventions. Financial tracking would enable governments and implementers to easily assess impact of projects they are implementing. Nations were urged to invest in evidence based high impact low cost interventions, investing in such actions helps to build human capital and improves productivity and economic growth.

In addition to increased budget allocations to nutrition, governments were also encouraged to ensure that country programs and policies are nutrition sensitive since they serve as underlying drivers of nutrition.

Background

CARE International and Graca Machel Trust (GMT) through the East and Southern Africa CSO SUN network have analyzed governments' commitment in nutrition through the 2015 national budget allocation and implementation of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive policies. The report covered the following countries: South Sudan, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Madagascar. The findings of the report were shared during a breakfast meeting in Zimbabwe by the Civil Society Alliance on the 20th of September 2018 at Holiday Inn in Harare. The sub-regional launch of the report was held in Rwanda.

The main aim of launching the report in Zimbabwe was to highlight the need for the government to consider increasing domestic investment in nutrition since nutrition is at the center for economic and human development. The meeting provided an opportunity for the alliance to advocate, highlight and profile gaps and opportunities for investment in nutrition. The meeting was attended by strategic multi-faced top policy and decision-makers from different ministries and sectors including the deputy director nutrition services from the ministry of health and child care Mrs Chigumira, SUN convener focal point person from the Food and Nutrition Council Ms Chigova, UNICEF nutrition specialist, Zephenia Gomora, honourable senator Tholakele Khumalo who is the county's SUN champion in parliament among other dignitaries. The meeting was also attended by journalists from both the electronic and print media as well as members of the civic society including representatives from Save the Children and Care International.

Budget analysis findings dissemination methods

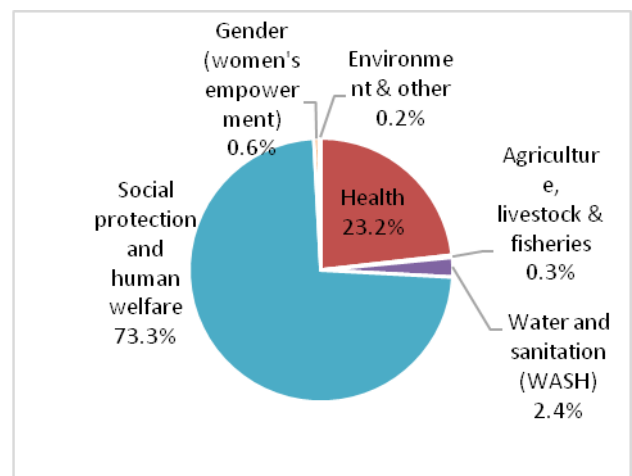
The meeting employed power point presentation, speeches, question and answer segment and a panel discussion in disseminating findings of the study. 40 copies of the regional report were shared with those who attended the meeting, and an additional 60 copies were distributed to provincial offices across the country. Before the meeting a public call was made on national TV for the government to increase its investment in nutrition to 3% between 2019 and

2022, this was made possible by showing the budget analysis video during prime time consecutively from the 6th to the 14th of September on national television ZTV. On the 28th of August the alliance was requested to present findings of the budget analysis during the national food and nutrition security meeting.

Budget analysis findings

Although the assessment covered 9 countries during the meeting much emphasis was on Zimbabwe and below are some of the key findings that were discussed.

Figure 1: Allocation of all nutrition spending across sectors (on- and off-budget programs)



Suggested recommendations

- Government must increase the share of nutrition budget through the national budget from 0.47% of the total budget to 3% progressively from the 2019 national budget.
- Develop mechanisms to increase nutrition spending per child as an approach to fight malnutrition/stunting and potential strategy to address long term challenges in nutrition.
- Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries should mainstream and integrate nutrition in their work. Government should increase nutrition investment in the three sectors from the current 6.4% since most rural households eat what they grow.

Links to stories published

- 1) <http://healthtimes.co.zw/2018/09/20/zim-needs-strong-domestic-funding-for-nutrition-civil-society/>
- 2) <http://spiked.co.zw/tag/stunting-high-in-east-and-southern-africa/>

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Conclusion

Investing in nutrition is an efficient use of resources because enormous social and financial costs of malnutrition are averted. Nutrition investments have one of the highest benefit-to-cost ratios in terms of poverty reduction. Moreover improved nutrition has an enhancing effect on investments in health, education and agriculture sectors. It is estimated that in Africa for every \$1 invested in nutrition the country will gain \$16 in future.

Required action

Progress in combating malnutrition in all its forms at country level will require actions listed below:

- 1) The government of Zimbabwe needs to honor its domestic, regional and international nutrition commitments such as the Nutrition for Growth Commitments by investing \$30 per child in the national budget.
- 2) Ministry of Finance and Economic together with ministry of Health and Child Care need to increase domestic expenditure in nutrition to a

minimum level of investment which is at least 3% of the national budget in the next 3 years.

- 3) National budget to have the inclusion of dedicated budget lines which support implementation of National Strategies and Policies on Nutrition.