

WCRF International Consultation Response

Online consultation submission:

2025-2030 World Health Assembly global maternal, infant and young child nutrition targets and proposal for process indicators

June 2024

We thank WHO for the opportunity to provide our feedback and present brief recommendations in response to the recently published [discussion paper](#) that we believe will help to inform the proposal for the 2025-2030 outcome and process indicators and targets.

Our comments on the key priority areas for each indicator or target that we responded to relate to efforts to support cancer prevention and survivorship. World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) International is a leading authority on the links between diet, nutrition, weight and physical activity and cancer. We are a not-for-profit organisation in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) since 2016. We work with partners around the world to promote policies that prevent cancer and other non-communicable diseases.

Global Outcome Indicator Targets

6. Will commitment to the extended nutritional outcome targets for 2030 serve to motivate action on improving nutrition?

We believe that renewed commitment can serve to stimulate further action on improving nutrition.

However, inclusion of smaller scope process indicators/targets or stocktaking moments would also be beneficial to help monitor progress in countries' progress towards achieving these goals. As described in the Discussion Paper, setting smaller sets of achievable targets over the next five years would help to add specificity, and possibly provide a clearer path in implementing specific interventions, driving advocacy efforts, and harmonizing technical assistance and collaboration between Member States. This would collectively serve to accelerate achievement of targeted outcomes, and possibly add a clearer understanding of the way forwards too.

Additionally, establishing more concrete evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in achieving the goals would also be beneficial in driving accountability towards commitments, and gaining insights into what interventions work well, or least well.

7. How can the “acceleration scenarios”, which represent a more feasible rate of progress, be used to motivate action on improving nutrition?

The acceleration scenarios are beneficial, so long as conditions that enabled success in 'exemplar countries' are replicable in others who are trying to achieve the same results. Efforts to identify common conditions across countries that can be foundations for success would be beneficial.

If these set standards that are at the outset non-achievable by other countries (e.g.: in a low- vs. high-income country setting), it may serve to be more defeating than motivating. Responses and support provided to countries by WHO should be provided in an equitable manner.

It would be helpful for WHO to provide technical assistance and details of case studies from successful acceleration scenarios to support Member States with their interventions and implementation of policies to advance progress. Providing policymakers and governments with a roadmap would provide support, and likely serve to maintain motivation and political will in the direction of achieving success. Regarding policy implementation where conflicts of interest may come into effect (e.g.: implementing tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, product reformulation), the collection and dissemination of legal arguments to help pass legislation and efforts to combat interference from industry would be beneficial to support governments in implementing best buy policies in their own countries. WCRF International's [Building Momentum report series](#) could also assist policymakers in this area, as they detail country experiences in policy design and implementation, and overcoming industry interference.

11. Specific comments on the extended targets for overweight

Providing more information on the range of childhood overweight in different regions/countries would be beneficial to increase specificity of global targets. For example, very high rates of childhood overweight in some areas (causing more need for intervention), with lower rates elsewhere (e.g. possibly in areas where malnourishment/underweight is a greater concern) could mask the urgency of increasing rates of childhood obesity in a region. Providing a global average alongside more disaggregated (regional or country) level data would be helpful in gaining a better understanding if these are reasonable targets, and where to better focus interventions to improve overall global rates of childhood overweight.

12. Specific comments on the extended targets for exclusive breastfeeding

It may be advisable to consider adjusting the target for exclusive breastfeeding given that progress, even at the rate of the highest performing countries starting from 2025, may still not reach the proposed target. Setting smaller, more achievable goals (that are context specific and relevant) may help in accelerating advancements in this area further.

Proposal for Operational Targets

14. Would the establishment of global operational targets help to accelerate progress towards the nutritional outcome targets in 2030?

Yes. It would be important to ensure that the global operational targets are designed in a smaller list format, that are achievable, measurable and reflective of actions that are causally linked to outcome targets. They could also be paired with a set of regional operational targets, to help increase attainability, contextuality, and motivation.

15. Are the criteria proposed for the selection of process indicators appropriate? Do you have any suggestions for how the criteria should be modified?

Yes, we believe these to be appropriate. No further suggestions.

Proposal for Operational Targets – Overweight

26. Are the indicators appropriate?

Yes.

27. Which of the two proposed indicators would be preferred?

Option 1: Percent of adults consuming sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) on previous day

28. Why would you prefer your selected indicator?

Considering the lack of data available for option 2, option 1 would be the preferred method of measurement.

29. Do you propose any alternative indicators?

Self-reported food and nutrition intake data can be notoriously inaccurate. Self-reporting intake of SSBs and foods high in fat, salt and sugar may also become increasingly inaccurate as awareness of the health-harming nature of these products is increasing. Tracking sales of SSBs or household spending would be beneficial to get a better sense of the quantity of the products that are being brought into homes, and the increased likelihood that children would have access to and/or consume these products.

Proposal for Operational Targets – Exclusive breastfeeding

30. Are the indicators appropriate?

Yes. However, we believe there would be value in including both indicators.

31. Which of the two proposed indicators would be preferred?

Option 2: Percentage of newborns being put to the breast in the first hour after birth

32. Why would you prefer your selected indicator?

While being beneficial to increasing rates and success of breastfeeding, it is more easily measurable and less qualitative in nature than Option 1. Health care professionals can also support reporting on this indicator by ensuring this is part of care provisions that are offered immediately after birth, and can also assist in reporting (beyond only relying solely on maternal recall). However if there was scope to have both indicators, we believe this could support more robust measurement of breastfeeding and incentivise governments to implement counselling practices to support exclusive breastfeeding. If this were to be implemented, it would be beneficial to standardize the quality of counselling that is delivered, perhaps with indicators for a minimum number of hours of counselling provided, necessary qualifications for care providers, and possibly having providers track programme delivery using health records to reduce incidences of double counting of mothers receiving care.

33. Do you propose any alternative indicators?

No further suggestions.