

Protecting nutrition in times of food price crisis:
Programs and policy responses

Background

Millions of people worldwide, particularly in low and middle income countries suffer from malnutrition. Malnutrition affects the survival, health, development, and well-being of those afflicted. Different approaches are used to combat nutrition deficiencies. Common strategies include micronutrient supplementation and fortification, breastfeeding promotion, behavior change and communication strategies to improve complementary feeding practices, and health interventions aimed at reducing infectious diseases. All of these strategies address the immediate causes of malnutrition, i.e., inadequate food and nutrient intake and poor health.

As such, these direct nutrition interventions have the potential to improve nutrition in the short term, especially if they are well targeted and achieve high coverage. The sustainability of these interventions, however, is questionable if they are implemented without simultaneously addressing some of the key underlying determinants of malnutrition. Malnutrition is rooted in poverty, food insecurity, gender inequity, and lack of access to health and other services. The failure to address the underlying causes of malnutrition – or the global context in which malnutrition occurs – is likely to undermine the long-term impacts and sustainability of interventions focusing only on the immediate determinants of MN malnutrition.

The need to address the underlying causes of malnutrition is particularly relevant in the context of the current global food and fuel price crisis, which has pushed an estimated 100 million people worldwide deeper into poverty.

Objectives of the mini-symposium

The objectives of the proposed symposium are to discuss the implications of the global food/fuel price crisis for child nutrition, and to review potential program and policy responses to protect vulnerable population groups. The focus is on multisectoral approaches that address both the immediate and the underlying determinants of child undernutrition, such as conditional cash transfer programs and agricultural interventions.

Session Chair & Co-Chair:

Chair: Marie T Ruel, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC, USA

Co-chair: Jef L Leroy, National Institute of Public Health (INSP), Mexico

Session Topics and Speakers:

Topic 1: *Introduction and overview of global food/fuel price crisis and its implications for nutrition*

Speaker: Marie T. Ruel, IFPRI, USA

Topic 2: *The World Food Program's response to the food price crisis*

Speaker: Martin Bloem, WFP, Rome, Italy

Topic 3: *The Nutritional Impact of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs*

Speaker: Jef Leroy, INSP, Mexico

Topic 4: *Agricultural programs: focusing on production for household food security and better nutrition*

Speaker: Victoria Quinn, HKI, USA

Topic 5: *Experiences from the Malawi Nutrition Program in Accelerating Child Survival: an example of mainstreaming nutrition within a national health strategy*

Speaker: Roger Mathisen, UNICEF, Malawi (TBC)

Short Sessions