



WORKSHOP REPORT

TOKYO FEBRUARY 15, 2008

Undernutrition: Creating New Responses

An Advance Workshop of the Pacific Health Summit

On February 15, 2008, The National Bureau of Asian Research's Center for Health and Aging (CHA) presented the first of two advance workshops for the 2008 Pacific Health Summit, for which CHA is the Secretariat. Entitled "Undernutrition: Creating New Responses," the event in Tokyo welcomed 50 leaders from Japan and the international nutrition community to discuss the critical issue of global undernutrition, focusing in particular on hoped-for new engagement by Japan in this field. The goals for the workshop were threefold:

First, in light of Japan's 2008 Group of Eight (G8) presidency, the workshop sought to educate and inform Japanese leaders about the significance of undernutrition in the world and how efforts to address this issue directly complement the G8's current global health priorities, especially those focused on maternal health and the health of children under two years of age. All Japanese participants engaged

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

- The global community will not be able to reach **UN Millennium Development Goals 1** (eradicate extreme hunger and poverty), **4** (reduce child mortality), or **5** (improve maternal health) without a major push on improving nutrition of mothers before and during pregnancy and children 0–24 months. Beyond that, it will be too late to make an impact.
- Unless the global community is able to **implement nutrition interventions targeting pregnant women and children 0–24 months at scale**, our knowledge about what works will be ineffectual.
- Finding ways to reduce the risk for new stakeholders to get engaged in the nutrition field will be critical to **successful partnerships**.
- **Education and communication** for decision makers about what works and how to bring success to scale is essential.



from right: **Tomohiko Sugishita**, Senior Advisor to the Institute for International Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency; **Kishio Ono**, Executive Technical Advisor to the Director-General, Human Development Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency; **Risaburo Nezu**, Senior Managing Director, Fujitsu Research Institute.

in interactive dialogue with the representatives of the international nutrition community in attendance.

Second, the workshop explored possibilities for long-term relationships between Japan and the international nutrition community. To this end, one panel focused on identifying innovative ways to engage the private sector in international efforts to address undernutrition. Discussion touched on Japan's special role as one of the few producers of potassium iodate, which is critical to the worldwide production of iodized salt.

Third, the workshop informed the 2008 Pacific Health Summit process by exploring in-depth a

variety of issues surrounding the challenge of undernutrition, such as identifying new financing mechanisms, investing in food science, strengthening education and communication programs, and scaling successful interventions.

Participants agreed that addressing maternal and child undernutrition is imperative, and the 2008 *Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition* provided the scientific and intellectual foundation for discussions. According to the series, more than 3.6 million mothers and children die each year as a result of undernutrition. Poor fetal and post-natal growth, micronutrient deficiencies, and suboptimal breastfeeding are responsible for more than one third of all child deaths and 11 percent of the global disease burden. "Getting a healthy start [for children under two years of age as well as mothers]" became a common thread in the discussions throughout the day.

A PUSH ON MATERNAL AND CHILD NUTRITION IS CRITICAL TO MEETING MDGs

"What does it take to mobilize the global action we all so desire?" **Jay Naidoo**, Chairman of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), opened the workshop with remarks about how deeply undernutrition affects populations across the globe—exacerbating poverty, disease,

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and mortality. While the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain a top line-item for most international organizations and global fora, the issue of undernutrition remains a low priority on most decision-makers' agendas. It is unlikely that the global community will achieve these goals by 2015.

Fortunately, collective action can speed up global progress toward achieving the MDGs. By mobilizing a worldwide coalition to address the challenges of undernutrition, the global community could drastically increase



Undernutrition: A recent challenge for Japan

While the domestic policy framework for nutrition in Japan currently focuses on complications associated with overweight/obesity, the Japanese are not far removed from the challenges surrounding undernutrition. Indeed, the majority of Japanese participants at the workshop remembered personally a time in Japan's recent history when hunger and stunting were the norm.

A poor harvest of agricultural products immediately following the end of World War II caused a serious shortage of food, widespread hunger, and malnutrition among mothers and young children. As a result, Japan was compelled to find other means to improve the diets of these vulnerable groups. The mobilization of resources in the 1940s accelerated

the modernization of Japanese food processing and consumption, which in turn leveraged advancements in science and technology.

In response to Japan's post-war experiences with malnutrition, the Japanese government issued its "Maternal and Child Health Handbook" (MCH) to help expectant mothers monitor their pregnancies, as well as their infants' health and development. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), an independent governmental agency that coordinates Japan's official development assistance in developing countries, has been using the handbook in many countries to incentivize health behavior and educate new mothers.

Kiyoshi Kurokawa, Chairman of the Health Policy Institute, Japan.



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its likelihood of reaching MDGs 1 (eradicate extreme hunger and poverty), 4 (reduce child mortality), and 5 (improve maternal health). A major push on improving the nutrition of mothers before and during pregnancy and children 0–24 months of age could make these MDGs newly realizable targets.

Mr. Naidoo also discussed his personal experiences in South Africa, illustrating how a

Japan has a history of taking big actions that make significant changes

global coalition of anti-apartheid forces provided crucial support to the struggle for freedom, a struggle that resulted in a democracy headed by President Nelson Mandela. Acknowledging Japan's G8 presidency in 2008, Mr. Naidoo noted that a similar coalition in support of nutrition efforts led by the G8 would be decisive in defeating undernutrition and liberating millions from the scourge of poverty. The *Lancet Series* can become a rallying point.

“Japan has a history of taking big actions that make significant changes,” he added, recalling the establishment of the unique, widely successful Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria created out of the 2000 G8 Summit, which Japan also led.

178 million children—32% of all children in the world—suffer from stunting

Stunting occurs when children do not reach their growth potential or are short for their ages. The condition is usually caused by diets without sufficient nutrients, as well as by high rates of infectious diseases. The consequences of stunting include increased morbidity and mortality; delays in motor and mental development; and decreased

work productivity. Most stunting occurs within the first two years of life, and stunted children usually become stunted adults, who in turn give birth to smaller babies. Thus interventions that target children under the age of two years could drastically reduce the prevalence of stunting worldwide.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Asian Development Bank

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Fujitsu Research Institute

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

Grameen Solutions, Ltd.

Health Policy Institute, Japan

Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Japanese Red Cross Kyushu International College of Nursing

Johns Hopkins University

Kagawa Nutrition University

The Lancet

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Japan

Ministry of Health, Ghana

Ministry of Health, Nigeria

The National Bureau of Asian Research

PepsiCo, Inc.

Table for Two

UNICEF

Unilever

USAID

WHO

World Bank

Kiyoshi Kurokawa, Chairman of the Health Policy Institute, Japan, emphasized the importance of Japan's role in mobilizing action to address global health challenges. "2008 brings enormous opportunities to highlight Japan's pre-existing leadership in global health through new action and commitments," he told participants.

Ambassador Koji Tsuruoka, Director-General of Global Issues in Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, joined the workshop's afternoon session and gave a summary of Japan's approach to the G8 process in 2008. Japan is focusing on a range of key issues as it prepares to host the upcoming Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) and the G8 Summit, during which UN Millennium Development Goals 4, 5, and 6 (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases) will be featured prominently.

Most stunting occurs
within the first two
years of life

Mother with her child in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



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“In order to ensure human security,” he added, “the global community must focus on maternal and child health, enhancement of community-based health services, and health system strengthening.”

BRINGING NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS TO SCALE

Conflicting opinions persist about which policy approaches and micronutrient combinations are most effective for targeting specific populations. However, broad consensus does exist about many core interventions which, if implemented at scale, could significantly reduce undernutrition around the world. For example, national and regional food fortification and supplementation programs could help to reduce vitamin A and zinc deficiencies, which account for the largest disease burden among the micronutrient deficiencies. Additionally, the global community could reduce the 1.4 million deaths each year that result from suboptimal breastfeeding through relatively simple breastfeeding promotion and education programs. A number of other clear, actionable interventions with proven success at scale exist. The remaining challenge is implementation.

Robert Black, Chairman of the Department of International Health at The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and the series lead for the 2008 *Lancet Series*, presented



It is possible to eliminate micronutrient deficiencies in the next 15 years

a summary of the Series papers to workshop participants. “If successful interventions were implemented at scale,” he noted, “they would reduce all child deaths by one quarter in the short term and reduce the prevalence of stunting in young children by one third, averting 60 million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs). Nutrition interventions must target children less than two years of age in order to have a significant impact on population health.”

Participants agreed that targeting mothers and children under two years of age with proven interventions that are outlined in the 2008 *Lancet Series* would bring about the most

positive results. If interventions target older children, collective knowledge about what works and current tools that can translate that into action will be ineffectual. Stunting and wasting begin in early childhood, and undernourished children are more likely to become stunted adults and to give birth to stunted babies. According to the *Lancet*, “poor fetal and post natal growth in the first two years of life lead to reduced economic productivity in adulthood.”

Tachi Yamada, President of Global Health at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, summarized

discussions that took place throughout the workshop. He addressed the theme of needing to scale nutrition interventions: “The challenge is to take what we know works and deliver it. It is not one-size-fits-all—we need to consider local contexts, existing models of success, and the demand for specific products.”

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: A CRITICAL PUZZLE PIECE

Participants agreed that creative partnerships between and within the private sector, NGOs,

Japanese partnerships to address undernutrition

Some Japanese companies have already become engaged in philanthropic activities to support improved nutrition. For example, Ajinomoto Company, Inc., which produces foods, seasonings, cooking oils, and pharmaceuticals, has five philanthropic foundations that focus on nutrition. In 2007, Ajinomoto partnered with Asian Sustainable Holistic Approach (ASHA) in India to improve nutrition and mother and child care in rural villages. This was one of several related nutrition projects supported by Ajinomoto.

Great potential exists for Japanese food and beverage companies like Ajinomoto, Kikkoman, and Kirin to become more substantively engaged in nutrition—not only through philanthropic activities, but also through creative business models.

An example of a Japanese company outside the nutrition realm engaging in a social business model is Sumitomo Chemical, Japan’s leading chemical maker, which provides mosquito-preventive bed nets to African countries.

The bed net, reputed to be the world’s most effective antimalaria tool now available, illustrates how a company can do good while doing good business. The company has factories for the production of these bed nets in Tanzania, Vietnam, and China, which has resulted in employment opportunities for the local people as well as a reduction in the malaria infection rate among infants.

The nutrition field provides many opportunities for similar successes for creative business and partnerships.

governments, and international organizations will be key to broader success in reducing undernutrition in the world.

But challenges remain: the nutrition community must find innovative ways to engage new stakeholders in nutrition and leverage the creativity of those stakeholders in terms of product development, as well as through marketing, delivery, and distribution.

Such partnerships are not always easy to establish; they necessitate market entry by low income groups, who in turn require products that are affordable, accessible, and appropriate for a low-income consumer lifestyle. Nevertheless, it is quite possible for a company

to be market-driven while also contributing to society in positive ways.

In keeping with the creative business theme, one participant from the private sector noted that “you cannot build a business in a failing society,” and therein lies the inherent interest for the private sector to engage in the fight against pervasive undernutrition.

Discussions touched upon successful examples of creative partnerships in nutrition, such as the joint venture between four Grameen companies and French DANONE. The venture—Grameen-DANONE Foods Ltd.—brings healthy nutrition in the form of fortified, affordable yogurt to low-income, nutritionally deprived populations



Schoolhouse in Quang Tri, Vietnam.

NBR

Increases in rice prices have had a significant impact on the world's poor in 2008. Prime Minister Fukuda of Japan has said that the food crisis will be among the major topics for discussion when G8 leaders meet for their annual Summit in July. Rising food prices increase the need for a broader focus on global nutrition.



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in Bangladesh. The venture generates profit and uses its surplus for expansion, improvement of quality, and increasing efficiency. This partnership has raised awareness of undernutrition and has carried an effective product to market.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL

In his summary remarks, Tachi Yamada advised participants that “nutrition is a means to critical ends: better health, reduced mortality,

and better survival. We must focus on those ends and ensure that nutrition is built into the momentum on other global health issues.”

Rethinking communications around undernutrition was another current that ran through the workshop’s panel discussions. Undernutrition is sometimes portrayed with the use of overwhelming statistics as an inevitable condition. But, in fact, it is a problem that can be successfully addressed. Indeed, the global community has the capacity to completely eliminate micronutrient deficiency in the next 15 years through targeted, coordinated global action. Appropriate education and communications can help both individuals and key decision-makers recognize the potential for enormous return on relatively modest financial investment in improving nutrition.

Major Courage Quarshigah, Minister of Health for Ghana, spoke to participants about how to make the case for addressing undernutrition to policymakers. “It is essential to attach a cost to *not* addressing a problem when making the case for greater attention and investment to



Major Courage Quarshigah, Minister of Health, Ministry of Health, Ghana.

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Participants interacting at a 2007 Pacific Health Summit plenary session.



Mark Weeks

policymakers,” he said. Incentives are essential to the success of any large-scale effort. Minister Quarshigah also touched on the importance of promoting regenerative diets that leverage indigenous foods. Investing in local education programs is another critical part of broad efforts to address undernutrition.

TOWARD THE PACIFIC HEALTH SUMMIT

The mission of the Pacific Health Summit is to connect science and policy for a healthier world. To support this process, the Summit provides an ongoing forum for world leaders to improve health by working together to grapple with problems and solutions, share best practices, and forge effective collaborations.

In June 2008, the Summit theme will be “The Global Nutrition Challenge.” Discussions will tackle the complex challenge of too little of the right nutrition for vulnerable populations and the rapidly emerging health threat of too much of the wrong kind of nutrition in both the developed and developing world.

Nutrition is a critical theme that touches almost every aspect of human existence. While the field is experiencing a renewed energy and

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optimism in 2008, spiraling food prices in recent months are threatening to exacerbate shortages, hunger, and undernutrition around the globe. As a result, it is imperative that the global community shift from traditional food aid approaches to a broader concept of food and nutrition assistance for countries hardest hit by the crisis. Both the public and private sectors have a role to play in addressing this critical issue.



Building on unprecedented opportunities in global health and the nutrition field in 2008, Summit Advance Workshops in Tokyo and London complement a year of events designed to foster new collaborations and partnerships in nutrition and help mold the program for June's discussions in Seattle. Three core themes that emerged from both workshops, which will feed directly into the Pacific Health Summit program, include:

- ❖ A need for research and science to uncover new and more effective interventions and novel technologies for diagnosing nutritional deficiencies and tracking progress on the global nutrition challenge.
- ❖ A need to engage the private sector in the nutrition field more holistically, bringing in new investment partners and innovative business models for reaching the highest-risk, "base-of-the pyramid" population.
- ❖ A need for more supportive policy environments that ensure coherence across sectors in the fight against undernutrition, especially in light of the emerging food crisis.



PACIFIC HEALTH SUMMIT
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For more information about Summit Advance Workshops please contact Claire Topal (email: ctopal@nbr.org).



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