



The Global Nutrition Report¹

Accountability, Validation, Independence, Legitimacy and Sustainability

The Global Nutrition Report is an initiative designed to help accelerate the decline in worldwide malnutrition. The Report was called for by over 90 signatories of the Nutrition for Growth Compact² and a concept note³ was subsequently developed by over 20 of those signatories. The Report is being executed by an Independent Expert Group (IEG). The Report attempts to accelerate malnutrition reduction. It will identify commitments to nutrition, track progress, and identify, use and respond to accountability.

This note outlines the IEG's responses to several fundamental questions that should be posed about the Report's framework of accountability, its ability to validate conclusions as well as its independence, legitimacy and sustainability. The note begins with a summary of the goal of the Report and how it attempts to achieve that goal.

1. What is the goal of the Report?

The ultimate goal of the Report is to help sustain and increase the global commitment to malnutrition reduction.

The Report will achieve these goals in the following ways:

Track Progress. The Report will track progress in outcomes, outputs and inputs against identified targets and commitments. There will be five domains of monitoring: commitment, resources, underlying determinants, programme coverage and nutrition status outcomes.

Identify bottlenecks to further progress. In addition to tracking these indicators and assessing progress against benchmarks, the Report will identify bottlenecks in efforts to accelerate reductions in undernutrition. Bottlenecks will be around vision, thinking, capacity, resources and commitment.

Guide action. Through identifying weaker links in the chain to improved nutrition status, the Report should help guide action. Which commitments are hardest to

¹ We would like to thank Peter Godwin, Sujaya Misra and Richard Horton for helping to inspire the development of this note and to Peter Godwin for helpful comments on an earlier draft. The IEG remains accountable for this draft.

² Nutrition4growth.org

³ <http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/3477#.U7klOzleflK>



keep? Where are resources failing to keep up? Which underlying determinants seem to be the key limiting factors and in which contexts? Which programmes need expanding, where and in what sequence? Which outcome indicators are lagging and in which combinations? While the Report will not, on its own, be able to identify priorities for action, resource mobilisation and collaboration, it should contribute significantly to the prioritisation process.

Connect stakeholders. The Report must connect, rather than divide, stakeholders. Reducing malnutrition is a collective endeavour, as the Scaling Up Nutrition movement has reinforced time and again.

Communicate effectively. The Report will be a waste of time and political capital if it is not used. This means asking who the audiences are and what will maximise their use of the material in this Report throughout the process.

All of these steps—monitoring progress against identified commitments, identifying bottlenecks, guiding action, connecting stakeholders and communicating effectively—must be taken if this Report is to sustain commitment with those already within the nutrition community and build it further by recruiting new stakeholders and hold all stakeholders to account.

2. What is the Report’s accountability framework?

Based on recent publications on nutrition accountability⁴, we use a simple five-stage accountability framework: identifying commitments, tracking progress, identifying accountability, using the accountability and responding to the accountability. The table below describes how we will undertake each of these steps in the accountability cycle.

Stage in Accountability Cycle	How will we do this?	Comments
1. Identify commitments (Who said they will do what and by when?)	<p><u>Explicit: public declarations of commitment</u></p> <p>We will be highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Health Assembly (WHA) Targets • N4G Commitments • Charters/Laws/Policies/Plans <p><u>Implicit: without targets</u></p> <p>We will highlight direction and speed of travel of</p>	Some commitments (e.g. nutrition status outcomes) are difficult to locate with a single responsible party (e.g. governments are not in complete control of these outcomes)

⁴ te Lintelo, D (2014) 'Accountability for International Nutrition Commitment Initiatives', IDS: Brighton; Kraak, Vivica I., et al. 'An accountability framework to promote healthy food environments.' Public health nutrition (2014): 1-17.



Stage in Accountability Cycle	How will we do this?	Comments
	indicators that evidence and theory suggest are good proxies for outcomes and determinants of nutrition status	
2. Track progress of a set of key indicators, some of which may have explicit commitments	<p>Via a set of 70 country-level indicators, for as many countries as possible</p> <p>Some will be against time-bound targets, some not.</p> <p>Some can be verified (e.g. nutrition status data from surveys, adherence to breast milk code) and some cannot (e.g. self-reported and there is no capacity to verify, e.g. CSO spending)</p>	<p>Data quality varies among indicators</p> <p>Many are self-reported</p> <p>We will signal issues of variable quality</p>
3. Identifying Accountability (Has commitment been met?)	Identified which commitments met or not in a transparent way in the Report, with an emphasis on how to relieve bottlenecks	We will take care to avoid potentially counterproductive “naming and shaming”
4. Using the Accountability	The Report seeks to create a series of spaces (virtual and real) and tools (e.g. data visualisation, two- page profiles) for civil society to hold those who make commitments to account, and for committers to provide their perspectives (via blogs, 10 report launches)	There are few formal ways for committers to be incentivised or sanctioned for failure to meet commitments, other than in the court of public opinion
5. Responding to Accountability	In subsequent Reports, commitments will be updated and progress against them will be tracked, with follow-up panels and highlights	To some extent we have to rely on self-reporting

3. How is the IEG validating the Report’s conclusions?

This is, of course, very difficult to do in a comprehensive manner. At the extreme, it would require us to double check, at source, every piece of data. We do not have the resources to do this and believe that a good enough validation can be achieved through the following things we will do:

- We are working closely with key data convenors (and some are members of the IEG). These individuals have clear and explicit standards for the quality of the data they endorse.
- Promoting access to data and transparency in how data are being used. All data will be made available at www.globalnutritionreport.org in easy-to-use formats. All assumptions about and transformations to the data will be clearly



documented. We will also describe the data we considered, but will not include and provide a rationale for our decision.

- Review of the Report by the Stakeholder Group (see [here](#) for a list) and their networks. The Stakeholder Group does not determine the final content of the Report and, while they have a particular stake in the Report, they are extremely knowledgeable and can provide a unique set of checks and balances.
- External peer review via *The Lancet*. *The Lancet* has kindly offered pro bono services to put the main text of the Report through a blind review process. This meets the expectations of IFPRI (the convening organisation) Publications Review Committee, chaired by Gershon Feder.
- Feedback on the Report is solicited and replied to in a location on the Report's website. For the 2014 Report, the time for public consultation will be brief—one to two weeks—but it will exist. We will respond to all comments received.
- There will also be an independently commissioned evaluation of the Report by the funders.
- The work around the more than 10 scheduled roundtable events around the world will provide a vital reality check for the Global Report. We are determined to make sure that the Report really helps national nutrition champions to achieve their objectives.

4. How independent is the IEG?

- We recognise that all IEG members (see [here](#) for a full list) have a particular perspective as a result of disciplinary training, location and institutional location.
- We have tried to be explicit about the reality of these differing perspectives in the construction of the IEG collective in order to promote checks and balances so that no particular group (e.g. UN, researchers, CSO; geographical region; nutritionists, economists, epidemiologists) can dominate.
- The IEG members were selected based on their individual views, independent of the organisation where they work.
- Each IEG member has submitted a short biography and statement of competing interests to make biases transparent.



- The IEG is the group that must be held accountable for the quality and independence of the Report and all members have acknowledged this in agreeing to participate.
- Finally, it is important to note that there are eight funders of the Report, ensuring that no funder can dominate. The statutory funding bodies (Governments of the UK, Canada, Ireland and the EU) are accountable to their citizens. The three foundation/CSO/research supporters (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, 1,000 Days and the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health) have made several public commitments on the importance of accountability. The supporters have made explicit funding commitments to nutrition and have reported data against those commitments—data that the Report will contain.

5. Legitimacy: who is the Report speaking for and why should anyone pay attention to it?

The legitimacy of the Report derives from the call for such an accountability report in the Nutrition for Growth Compact, signed by over 90 organisations. This call was further refined by the establishment of a Stakeholder Group that delivered a formal set of TORs for the report, including the formation of an IEG that would be accountable for the quality of the Report.

Nevertheless, the Stakeholder Group and the IEG are not formal entities, so issues of legitimacy are especially pertinent. We have sought to strengthen our legitimacy in a number of ways:

- A concept note for the outline of a proposed Global Nutrition Report was shared⁵ for public comment, which was incorporated into the revised concept note that went to the Stakeholder Group for decision.
- A global call was put out for nominations to the IEG.⁶ Approximately 60 nominations were made. The Stakeholder Group selected two co-chairs from those 60; the co-chairs selected the IEG based on a clear set of criteria⁷. This enhances our legitimacy.

⁵ <https://www.ids.ac.uk/news/creating-a-one-stop-shop-for-global-nutrition-data>

⁶ <http://www.developmenthorizons.com/2014/03/global-nutrition-report-status-update.html>

⁷ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/211585719/Call-for-nominations-to-the-Independent-Expert-Group-for-the-Global-Nutrition-Report>



- The IEG members speak for themselves, for the Stakeholders who constituted the IEG and for other organisations that the IEG agrees can endorse the Report.
- The diversity of IEG and Stakeholder Group membership across countries, sectors and society ensures that the coalition of voices spoken for is broad.
- Why should anyone pay attention to the Report? The value added of the Report is that it brings together a wide range of organisations and indicators, and it does so for all countries. It does not substitute for or compete against other important processes; rather, it aims to showcase them and connect them to others.
- The IEG's aim is that the quality (rigour, relevance, innovativeness, comprehensiveness, timeliness and accessibility) of the Report will ultimately be the reason people pay attention to it.

6. A final note on sustainability

How sustainable is the Global Nutrition Report process? It is clear that the more temporary an accountability process is perceived to be, the easier it is to dismiss. Because the Report is intended to be delivered annually, this adds to the demands. How sustainable is the Global Nutrition process?

The Report is in its first year and we will find out as we proceed; however, this question is strongly in our mind and we are taking decisions and steps to promote sustainability, such as:

- Seeking the institutional support of an inter-governmental research organisation (IFPRI) with a reputation for excellence and integrity.
- Working with data that are produced by other organisations on a basis that is already standardised. Where some data are newly produced for the Report, we will work with the providers to assess what can be done to make future collection and reporting easier and more streamlined.
- Setting up Report processes (e.g. the country profile templates, data documentation, data provenance, data visualisation) with a long-term view.
- Identifying areas of accountability for nutrition that need to be strengthened and with some ideas on how to do that.