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2023-2030 REGIONAL
**UN NUTRITION
COLLABORATION
FRAMEWORK**

For the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean,
Near East and North Africa Regions

Introduction

There has been important progress in reducing the number of children affected by stunting in the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, Near East and North Africa Regions over the last decade. But malnutrition still affects far too many children in the regions, threatening their survival, health and future potential.

Since 1990, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Eastern Mediterranean (EM), Near East and North Africa (NENA) regions have seen a significant reduction in chronic undernutrition, i.e., in the number of stunted children. However, the prevalence of stunting remains too high – with 6 of 25 countries/territories in these regions having $\geq 30\%$ of their children under five stunted. Wasting, the most lethal form of malnutrition, is also high across many countries in these regions. The regional wasting average of over 6% of children under five years in these regions masks the very high wasting levels ($\geq 15\%$) in some countries. In addition, high levels of anaemia among children and women of childbearing age, and other micronutrient deficiencies in these groups, continue to threaten safe pregnancies, newborns, infants and young children's development and growth. At the same time, over the last decade, the prevalence of childhood overweight in these regions has remained stagnant and higher than the global average (5.5-5.6%), thus highlighting that the malnutrition crisis in the regions has a triple threat – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity.

Community, household, and family factors contribute to the region's malnutrition crisis. Lack of access to nutritious, safe foods and affordable diets; sub-optimal feeding practices for infants and young children (one in three infants under six months is exclusively breastfed, and one in four children 6-23 months receives nutritious diets); and inadequate coverage of essential health and nutrition services are the key determinants. Addressing these key determinants of malnutrition in the region is necessary for preventing and treating malnutrition in the regions.

Food insecurity is a significant contributor to the region's high prevalence of undernutrition. Furthermore, the region's food systems are constrained by a lack of water and arable land to produce adequate food for its growing population, making it a net food importer. Natural or man-made conflicts also afflict many countries in the region, and others have been in crisis for years. This, combined with the global food and nutrition crises, has further impacted the food supply chain for several countries in the region.

The growing malnutrition crisis and diverse contexts across these regions necessitate greater collaboration and partnerships among critical nutrition stakeholders at the regional and country levels, including national governments, donors, academia, research institutions, civil society organisations, and UN agencies. This is critical for fostering synergies and utilizing all stakeholders' influence, skills, and resources to make a difference in tackling the region's high levels of malnutrition. The food, health, education, water and sanitation, and social protection systems must be enhanced to provide a complete nutrition response in the region.

As a step towards strengthening the collaboration among the UN agencies and harmonising their technical support on nutrition to MENA, EM and NENA countries between the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), and World Food Programme (WFP) have developed and agreed

on a Regional Nutrition Collaboration Framework (Framework). Recalling the World Health Organization for the Eastern Mediterranean Region's resolutions EM/RC66/R¹ on the regional framework for action on obesity prevention 2019-2023 and EM/RC65/6 and the strategy on nutrition for the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2020-2030², which the Member States have endorsed; UNICEF's Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030³, a call to action to address maternal and child undernutrition⁴, FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31⁵, endorsed, approved by FAO Member States and outlining the vision and strategy for Better Nutrition, Better Production, Better Environment, and Better Life, and in alignment with Global collaboration and partnership agreements⁶ and agencies' global strategies and plans, this Framework aims to facilitate the following in the MENA, EM, and NENA regions:

1

Identification of the areas for strategic collaboration

between the four UN agencies on nutrition through the life cycle

2

Systematic technical collaboration and coordination

at the regional level for accelerating action on nutrition through the life course in countries

3

Joint and complementary actions

on nutrition at the regional and country level

4

Harmonized joint support

to countries on prioritizing and influencing action on nutrition

5

Joint advocacy, resource mobilization and knowledge management

at the regional and country levels

¹ (<https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/RC66-R1-eng.pdf>) on the Strategy on nutrition for the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2020–2030 (<https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/9789290222996-eng.pdf?ua=1>); and EM/RC65/6 (<https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/RC>

² (https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/EMROPUB_2019_en_22319.pdf?ua=1&ua=1)

³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/92031/file/UNICEF%20Nutrition%20Strategy%202020-2030.pdf>

⁴ http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/nutrition/documents/call_to_action_mch_undernutrition_in_mena_emr_arab_regions_jun_2022.pdf

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en>

⁶ Global collaboration and partnership agreements on maternal and child nutrition –

- UNICEF and WFP Partnership Framework for Addressing Wasting in Children Globally: For jointly scaling up prevention and innovative treatment services, to help reduce the global burden of wasting so that no child is left behind.
- UNICEF and WFP partnership to scale up School Feeding, Nutrition, Health and WASH interventions: a renewed partnership commitment, UNICEF and WFP will join forces to ensure that millions of vulnerable school aged children, in fragile countries, receive the health and nutrition support they need to learn and thrive.
- Strategic Collaboration Framework between UNICEF and WHO: to set the overall vision for the strategic collaboration between WHO and UNICEF and to link the normative and technical collaboration between the two organizations at all levels



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Regional **UN** Nutrition Collaboration Framework

For addressing Malnutrition in the Middle East and
North Africa (MENA), Eastern Mediterranean (EM), Near
East and North Africa (NENA) Regions

Early Childhood Nutrition

Prevention of all forms of malnutrition and treatment of childhood wasting

Leveraging the health, WASH and social protection systems

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES ⁷	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Breastfeeding (0-23 months)			
Support countries with advocacy to align the national Code provisions with the International Code and support their implementation and enforcement.	WHO/UNICEF	WFP/FAO	Gulf Cooperation Council countries – Kuwait and Oman, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon
Technical support and capacity building on protection, promoting and supporting breastfeeding.	WHO/UNICEF	WFP/FAO	
Enhancing the regional monitoring and use of data, on breastfeeding for action and advocacy.	UNICEF/WHO	WFP/FAO	

⁷ When two or more agencies are listed, they are co-leading, with the one listed first leading the technical leadership and coordination at the regional level, unless specified.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Improving young children's diets during the complementary feeding period (6-23 months)			
Situational analysis of determinants and drivers of young children's diets.	UNICEF/WHO	FAO/WFP	Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, the State of Palestine (SoP), and Yemen
Support countries in designing and implementing multi-system actions aligned with the MENA regional framework for improving young children's diets.	UNICEF/WFP/WHO	FAO	
Support countries in advocating and implementing micronutrient supplementation, home fortification (MNPs and SQ-LNS), and comprehensive Large-Scale Food Fortification, encompassing salt iodization.	UNICEF/WHO/WFP	FAO	Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, the State of Palestine (SoP), and Yemen
Support countries in designing and delivering high-quality counselling and support services, accompanied by raising awareness about nutritious and healthy complementary foods.	UNICEF/WHO/WFP	FAO	
Support countries in developing localised food supply chains to enhance the accessibility of nutritious foods within both markets and households.	FAO/WHO	UNICEF/WFP	

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Prevention of child wasting (0-59 months)			
Support countries in expanding the coverage and enhancing the quality of preventive intervention packages targeted at pregnant women, children under five, and their mothers, focusing on the first 1,000 days.	UNICEF/WHO/ WFP	FAO	Djibouti, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen
Support countries to develop and implement nutrition-sensitive social protection policies, strategies, and programs, encompassing cash assistance to ensure that children and women from vulnerable families can access nutritious diets, essential nutrition services, and nutrition education/ counseling.	WFP/UNICEF	WHO/FAO	
Support countries to enhance nutrition within emergency and resilience programmes, including agricultural programs, by facilitating producer households' access to nutritious and healthy diets for high-risk young children, adolescent girls, and pregnant or lactating women. Additionally, foster the integration of diverse initiatives as a part of the commitment to the wasting Global Action Plan.	FAO/WHO	WFP/UNICEF	

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Early detection and treatment of child wasting (0-59 months)			
Support countries in delivering services for the early detection and treatment of childhood wasting, through the three foundational pillars of primary health care: facility-based services, outreach services, and community-based services.	UNICEF/WHO/WFP ⁸	FAO	Djibouti, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen
Support countries with wasting Global Action Plan to implement their country roadmaps.	UNICEF/WHO/WFP	FAO	
Support countries in implementing simplified approaches for early prevention, detection and treatment of wasting - based on the country context and in line with national protocols - to improve the effectiveness, quality, and coverage of programmes and to prioritize children at the highest risk of dying ⁹ .	UNICEF/WFP/WHO	FAO	

⁸ Organizations leading as per their mandates i.e., WHO: Management of children with severe acute malnutrition (severe wasting) with complications, in particular for children under five (in-patient care), UNICEF: prevention of children with wasting, early detection and treatment of children with severe wasting (out-patient care); WFP: prevention and management of moderate wasting (supplementary feeding programme). If the situation demands, UNICEF as the Nutrition Cluster lead, acts as a provider of last resort in consultation with other UN agencies.

⁹ Expanded criteria should be based on national guidelines and protocols and agreed for a set period of time. The use of RUTF should be prioritized for the treatment of children with severe wasting in line with the UNICEF/USAID/WFP/Global Nutrition Cluster's guiding principles (August 2022).

Nutrition of School-Age Children and Adolescents

Prevention of all forms of malnutrition in school-age children and adolescents

Leveraging the education system

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Support countries in developing national policies and plans to improve the health and nutrition of school-age children and adolescents.	UNICEF/FAO/ WHO	WFP	Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, and the SoP
Support countries in integrating school health and nutrition literacy in school curriculums and education sector plans.	UNICEF/WFP/ WHO/FAO		
Support countries in improving school food environments and related policies and legislation for school-aged children and adolescents, including the promotion of marketing of unhealthy foods.	WHO/UNICEF/ FAO	WFP	
Support countries in delivering micronutrient supplementation and deworming for school-age children and adolescents (iron and folic acid, MNPs).	UNICEF/WHO	WFP/FAO	
Support countries in implementing school feeding programmes and strengthening their linkages with school health and nutrition programmes.	WFP/FAO/UNICEF	WHO	

Prevention of Overweight and Obesity

In early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and women

Leveraging the food and health systems

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Support countries in implementing and accelerating actions to prevent overweight and obesity.	WHO/UNICEF	FAO/WFP	Egypt, Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia
Support countries in developing roadmaps to implement national policies on overweight and obesity prevention.	WHO/UNICEF/FAO	WFP	
Support countries in developing policies and guidelines to improve children's food environment including through public sector policies on marketing, labelling, financial incentives, and disincentives.	WHO/UNICEF/FAO	WFP	

Improved access to nutritious, safe, affordable, diversified and healthy diets

Strengthening the agriculture sector and the national enabling environment

Leveraging the food systems

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Support countries in using trade as an enabler for nutrition and advocate with Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, Industry, and partners to diversify food production with nutrient-rich foods.	FAO/UNICEF/WHO	WFP	Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Kuwait and Yemen, UAE
Support countries in developing policies on the production, storage, fortification and bio-fortification of local and commercial foods.	FAO/WHO	UNICEF/WFP	
Support countries in advocating for and developing food-based dietary guidelines that cater to the nutrition needs of children, adolescents, and women.	FAO/UNICEF/WHO	WFP	
Support countries in advocating for and supporting the implementation of national food standards targeted at children.			

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
<p>This includes breastmilk substitutes, complementary foods, and provisions for children in early childhood development centers and school-based programmes. Additionally, support the provision of nutritionally adequate foods for children within public sector and social protection programmes.</p>	<p>UNICEF/ FAO/ WHO</p>	<p>WFP</p>	<p>Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Kuwait and Yemen, UAE</p>
<p>Support countries in strengthening food value chains that increase the nutritional quality of children’s and women’s diets, particularly by advocating and improving the availability and affordability of safe, age-appropriate nutritious foods.</p>	<p>FAO/UNICEF/WFP/ WHO</p>		
<p>Support countries in collecting, interpreting, and disseminating dietary data for evidence-informed decision-making, including appropriate use in Common Country Analyses and UNSDCF development.</p>	<p>FAO/ UNICEF/ WFP/WHO</p>		
<p>Support countries in implementing their Food system pathways, including facilitating engagement with UN Food System Summit Coalition for Action in alignment with national interests and priorities.</p>	<p>FAO/ UNICEF/ WFP/WHO</p>		

Advocacy and positioning for nutrition

At the regional and country levels

Leveraging the food, health, education and social protection systems

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Support countries in advocating with their governments and donors for prioritizing multi-system nutrition action across the continuum of prevention, early detection and treatment.	UNICEF/WHO/ WFP/FAO		All countries in the region
Support countries in developing and refining their national nutrition policies, strategies and plans for the implementation of multi-system action across the continuum of prevention, early detection and treatment.	UNICEF/WHO/ WFP/FAO		
Joint advocacy through the release of joint reports, statements, bulletins and advocacy meetings for improved positioning and better resources for nutrition in the region.	UNICEF/WHO/ WFP/FAO ¹⁰		

¹⁰ Agencies to lead the regional advocacy as per their organizational mandates by ensuring collaboration with other UN agencies.

Actions on climate change and nutrition

Evidence, advocacy and strategies

Leveraging the food and health systems

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	PRIMARY AGENCIES	SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES	PRIORITY COUNTRIES
Leverage the I-CAN (Initiative on Climate Action and Nutrition) to serve as a platform for facilitating the exchange of data, capacities, knowledge, and expertise on mutually beneficial policies and actions.	WHO/WFP/FAO	UNICEF	Egypt, UAE
Assessing the impact of climate change on nutrition in specific countries within the region.	FAO/WHO	UNICEF/WFP	
Supporting countries in integrating and implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies within policy and action plans with an aim to concurrently enhance nutrition outcomes and catalysing transformative action to deliver healthy diets through sustainable food systems.	FAO/WHO	UNICEF/WFP	

