



| Webinar

Research priorities for nutrition in adolescence and middle childhood

20th January 2023

2pm GMT / 9am EST /
5pm EAT / 7.30pm IST

Hosted by the Global Adolescent
Nutrition Network (GANN)

www.ennonline.net/ourwork/adolescentnutrition





Research Priorities for Nutrition in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

Results of a CHNRI survey

January 2023

Dr Natasha Lelijveld

This work was generously funded by USAID

Background and Rationale

- Growing recognition of the importance of adolescent nutrition, but still under-researched and under-invested area
- Lack of data, intervention studies, policies, and targets for nutrition in school-age children (SAC) and adolescents (5-19 years)
- *Lancet* series on adolescent nutrition (2021) set the scene and summarized current burden and programming.
- To stimulate and guide further research, this study generated a list of research priorities for the next 10 years

The CHNRI method

Aim: to help prioritise health research investments

It measures collective optimism of a larger number of stakeholders toward various components of many proposed research ideas, within an agreed context and using the agreed criteria.

Systematic

Generates consensus

Engages a wide audience

Provides evidence to catalyse research

Child Health and Nutrition
Research Initiative

CHNRI



STEPS:

1. Set up Expert Advisory Group
2. Define context
3. List research ideas
4. Define judging criteria
5. Set up and run survey to rank research ideas
6. Statistical analysis & dissemination

Our Context

- **Population:** school-aged children (SAC) and adolescents, 5 to 19 years old, disaggregated by age group, in school vs. out of school, and separate questions for pregnant adolescent girls.
- **Disease:** all forms of malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies, thinness (low BMI-for-age), stunting (low height-for-age), overweight/obesity (high BMI-for-age), and suboptimal dietary quality.
- **Geography:** LMICs, including research at sub-national, national, regional or global level.
- **Timescale:** to achieve measurable results in prevalence of malnutrition in the next 10 years

Our judging criteria

Answerability This research question is answerable

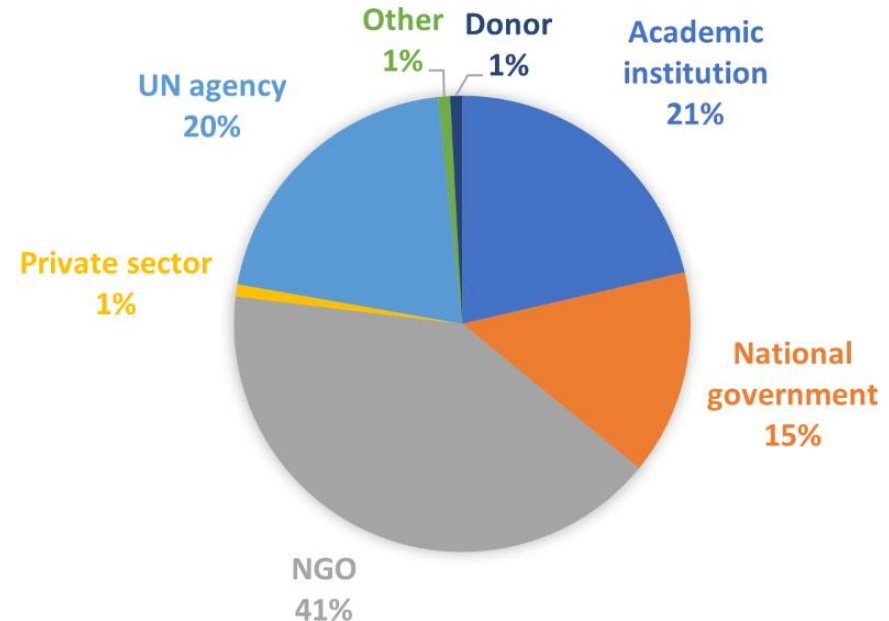
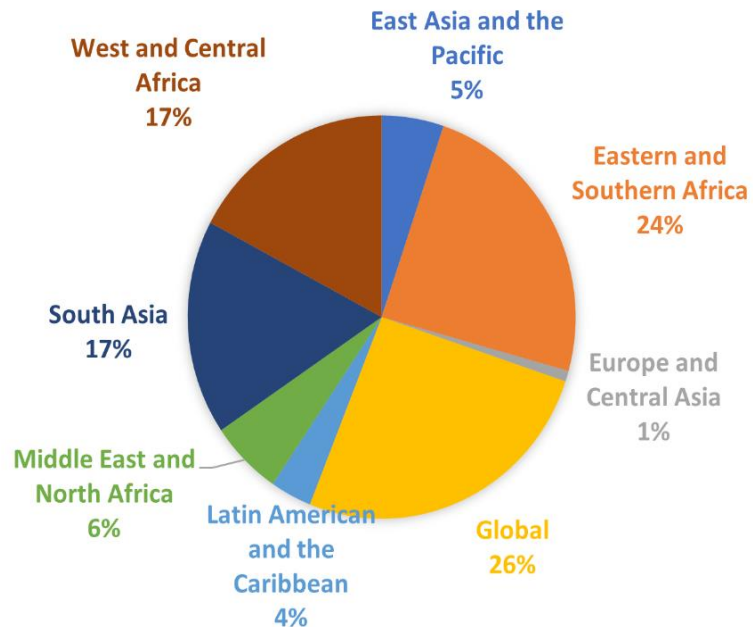
Effectiveness This research could result in an intervention that is effective for preventing or managing malnutrition in SAC and adolescents

Deliverability This research could result in an intervention that is deliverable

Equity This research could result in an intervention that improves equity amongst SAC and adolescents

Results

- ▶ 285 people registered for the survey; 116 respondents completed at least 1 section of the survey (6 in French, 3 in Spanish).
- ▶ Question order was randomised so that incomplete surveys could be included;
- ▶ 3% (4/116) of respondents were younger than 25. Respondents reported that their work focused on 38 unique countries and represented a broad range of organisations





Six most pressing research questions for adolescent nutrition

(based on a wide stakeholder survey)

1. How should antenatal and postnatal care interventions be adapted to effectively, and cost-effectively, support the specific health and nutritional needs of pregnant adolescents?

2. What strategies are effective for delivering interventions in schools to improve quality of diets and nutritional outcomes of school-age children (SAC) and adolescents?

3. What strategies are effective at involving SAC and adolescents in defining their own context-specific solutions to nutrition problems, and does their involvement result in more effective interventions?

4. What are effective, context specific, behaviour change communication strategies to improve diets and nutritional status of SAC and adolescents?

5. What improvements can be made to local food systems to support access to healthy diets in schools?

6. What are the optimal sectoral partnerships and delivery platforms (health, education, social protection, digital platforms, media etc.) for effective uptake of nutrition interventions for SAC and adolescents?

Download full 'Research Roadmap' report and published paper now

Results - more detail

- ▶ Of the research questions ranked in the top ten, half focused on delivery strategies for reaching adolescents and half on improving existing interventions.
- ▶ **Age disaggregation:** There were few differences in the ranked order of questions
 - ▶ question on drivers of food choice was ranked a higher priority for the oldest age category than the younger categories
 - ▶ question on optimal school meals was ranked higher for the youngest age category
- ▶ **In-school vs out-of school:** Those related to in-school children and adolescents had higher 'expert agreement' than those for out-of-school adolescents
 - ▶ Top ranked out-of-school question was about optimal delivery platforms for interventions
- ▶ **Regional disaggregation:** few difference in ranked order of questions
 - ▶ South Asia ranked a question on the effectiveness of integrating nutrition programmes with sexual and reproductive health interventions more highly than other regions
 - ▶ West and Central Africa ranked a question on the cost-effectiveness of macronutrient supplementation for thin SAC and adolescents more highly than other regions

Top 5 pregnancy-related questions

RANK	RESEARCH QUESTION
1	How should antenatal and postnatal care interventions be adapted to effectively and cost-effectively support the specific health and nutritional needs of pregnant adolescents?
2	What risk factors (biological, social, environmental etc.) impact the nutritional status of pregnant adolescents, including those in humanitarian contexts?
3	What is the most acceptable and effective strategy in implementing daily multiple micronutrient supplementation for pregnant adolescents?
4	What are the benefits of delaying early pregnancy on nutrition outcomes for adolescent girls?
5	Are standard interventions that have been shown to be effective and cost-effective in all pregnant /post-natal women, equally effective and cost-effective in pregnant adolescents?

'Other' rankings

CATEGORY	RESEARCH QUESTION
MOST ANSWERABLE	What strategies are effective for delivering interventions in schools to improve quality of diets and nutritional outcomes of SAC and adolescents?
MOST EFFECTIVE	
MOST DELIVERABLE	
MOST EQUITABLE	How should antenatal and postnatal care interventions be adapted to effectively and cost-effectively support the specific health and nutritional needs of pregnant adolescents?
HIGHEST RANKED 'DISCOVERY' QUESTION	What standard indicators should be used to assess impact of nutrition interventions on school achievement, productivity, and wellbeing (e.g., mental, social, spiritual health) in SAC and adolescents?

Summary

- ▶ Overall, the top priority questions were similar across middle childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence, and focused on development and delivery of interventions.
- ▶ This likely reflects the current knowledge base - efforts to date primarily focused on establishing needs /burden and advocating for their inclusion within global research, policy and programming agendas.
- ▶ Future work should prioritise identifying and delivering effective interventions to reduce the burden of malnutrition, starting in schools
 - ▶ Nutrition programmes should incorporate implementation research to inform delivery
 - ▶ Academic research on the development and tailoring of existing nutrition interventions is needed

