

Country-Level Nutrition Advocacy using PROFILES and Nutrition Costing

Updated by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistant Project (FANTA), originally developed by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), now FHI360, funded by USAID

Contact:

Kavita Sethuraman (kavitasethuraman@hotmail.com)

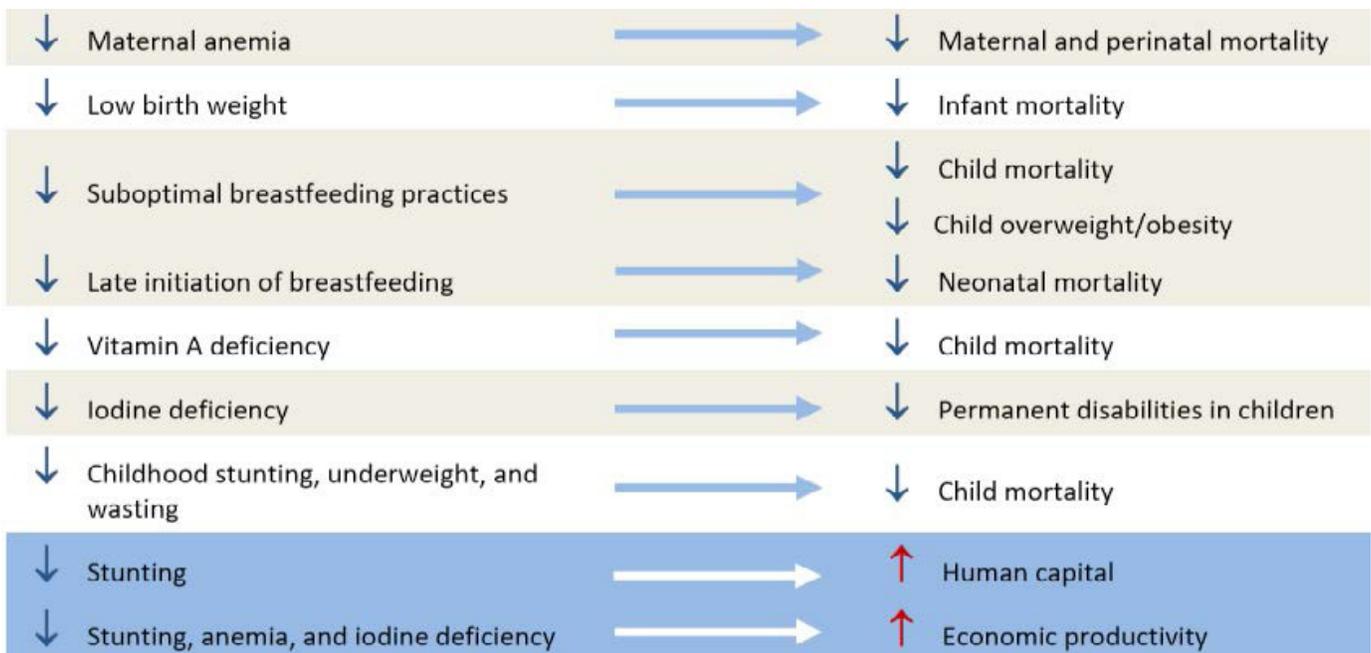


Key Questions Addressed

The Manual for Country-level Nutrition Advocacy using PROFILES and Nutrition Costing was created to support countries that seek to undertake a nutrition advocacy process that in part uses a tool called PROFILES. PROFILES is a spreadsheet-based nutrition advocacy tool used to calculate consequences if malnutrition does not improve or change over a defined time period. The tool also calculates the benefits of improved nutrition over the same time period, including lives saved, disabilities averted, human capital gains, and economic productivity gains related to reduction in the prevalence of nutrition problems such as iron deficiency anemia; low birth

weight; vitamin A deficiency; iodine deficiency; suboptimal breastfeeding practices; and childhood stunting, underweight, and wasting. PROFILES also includes two of the risk factors for stunting—inadequate dietary diversity among children 6-24 months and being born to a teenage mother age 19 years or younger—and can estimate reduction in the number of children with stunting related to improved dietary diversity and to reduction in teenage pregnancy. In addition, the Manual provides optional guidance on costing to develop cost estimates for nutrition service delivery.

Figure 1: Nutritional Problems Addressed in PROFILES and the Benefits of their Reduction





How does this help nutrition decision making?

The nutrition advocacy process using PROFILES can support the development of nutrition policy, especially by making the case for why investing in nutrition is important to achieve gains in health and development outcomes that are important for a country – and that a country may have committed to in the form of targets for the Sustainable Development Goals.



What are the data needs?

Data needs include current prevalence of nutrition problems, demographic, mortality, economic, and education data from national sources. Data focuses on women and children, and are usually obtained from the DHS, MICS, MIS, and national micronutrient surveys.



What technical resources are needed to implement this tool?

Staff requirements include: One locally-based team member who has a sound knowledge of nutrition in that country; who has relationships with nutrition stakeholders in the government, among donors, and among implementing partners; and prior experience with PROFILES, preferably in the country of focus. Also, two facilitators are needed that combine sound knowledge of epidemiology and of public health nutrition in developing country contexts; of nutrition advocacy concepts, a basic understanding of spreadsheet models; facilitation skills and expertise in participatory methodologies such as visualization in participatory programs (VIPP) that build upon consensus-building and participatory principles.



How long does it take?

The nutrition advocacy process using PROFILES requires no primary data collection. If recent survey data are available, a one-day stakeholder meeting followed by the PROFILES workshop can be completed in 4 days. This is usually followed by a 4-day nutrition advocacy planning workshop. The overall nutrition advocacy planning process can take a year or so to complete.



Strengths and limitations?

Strengths:

- Generates country-specific evidence-based estimates of negative consequences related to various nutrition problems, and of benefits related to improved nutrition
- Uses up-to-date evidence from the scientific literature complemented by country-specific data that is agreed upon in collaboration with national stakeholders
- Provides estimates that can support advocacy for a wide range of nutrition problems
- Can flexibly advocate for interventions to focus on specific nutrition issues or action to address malnutrition overall
- Embedded in a broader advocacy approach, the Manual provides guidance on:
 - Convening multi-sectoral stakeholders to guide the nutrition advocacy planning process using PROFILES and Nutrition Costing in country
 - Developing a harmonized National Nutrition Advocacy Plan and corresponding advocacy materials targeted to key audiences identified in the Nutrition Advocacy Plan
 - Developing nutrition advocacy materials that include PROFILES estimates and findings from Nutrition Costing if this was carried out using a planning tool for workshop participants

Limitations:

- Because different malnutrition problems can co-exist in the same person (double burden, etc), it is difficult to effectively account for co-existing forms of undernutrition. PROFILES calculates estimates for individual nutrition problems.
- While nutrition interventions are addressed through the broader advocacy process, the estimates that PROFILES calculates are not linked to nutrition interventions, but rather linked to improving health, human capital and economic productivity outcomes to make the case for investing in nutrition to see benefits for health and development.