Highlight 1: Transform Nutrition Marks End of First Phase

Transform Nutrition, led by the International Food Policy Research Institute, uses research-based evidence to inspire effective action to address undernutrition. The consortium of five international research and development partners seeks to strengthen the evidence base for nutrition, focusing on the 1,000-day period from conception to 24 months of age, when interventions aimed at reducing undernutrition are most effective.

The project’s first phase, begun in 2011 and funded by UK aid from the UK government, operated in South Asia and East Africa—regions with the highest rates of undernutrition globally. The consortium has generated nearly 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, approximately 150 briefs, blogs, and newsletters targeted to relevant audiences, and more than 1,500 citations to date, influencing program and policy decisions in its focus countries and helping to shape regional and global dialogue on this critical subject.

With August 2017 marking the end of this first phase, the consortium convened two research symposia to discuss results from and next steps for East Africa and South Asia. These regional events were an opportunity to celebrate the range of high-quality evidence the consortium had generated with the networks of leaders it had fostered, and to inspire those leaders to action for change for the future. The events drew a combined total of more than two hundred people, including participants from nongovernmental organizations, academia, government, donor agencies, and the media, who came to discuss tackling undernutrition in each region.

The first symposium was held in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 8, and concentrated on achievements in and challenges remaining for Kenya and Ethiopia. A month later, participants gathered in Kathmandu, Nepal, to discuss issues and progress in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Each event featured presentations from researchers and local stakeholders about lessons learned during the six years of the project. Discussion and participation from the audience enabled attendees to network and learn from one another’s experiences.

A key priority that emerged in both conferences is the need to transform and strengthen leadership. At the South Asia meeting, participants homed in on the need to build leadership capacity at the local level by supporting staff and frontline workers in communities. Participants in the East Africa conference highlighted the key role of leaders in bringing actors together across sectors to ensure nutrition receives proper attention. Barriers to delivery and implementation created by limited infrastructure was another issue noted at the Kenya meeting and echoed in Nepal.

All research undertaken by Transform Nutrition is available on the website, while summaries for key themes can be found in these issue guides:

- Nine key ingredients for transforming nutrition delivery
- The role of social protection and agriculture in tackling chronic undernutrition
- Enabling environments for nutrition

In 2017, Transform Nutrition moved into its second phase, developing a West Africa regional platform for action on nutrition, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.