

Global Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition: Technical Symposium
May 27, 2021 14:15 – 17:00 BST

Hosted by the London School of Tropical Hygiene & Medicine in partnership with
the United Nations World Food Programme and Dubai Cares

Research Priorities highlighted during the Technical Symposium

This is not a summary of the discussions.

Panel 1: Research priorities from a programming perspective: The view from national programmes

Chair: Prof. Donald Bundy, LSHTM, Director of the Global Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition

Panellists:

- **Daniel Balaban**, Director of the Centre of Excellence against Hunger, Brazil
- **Zhao Chen**, China Development Research Foundation, Beijing, China
- **Vladimir Chernigov**, Director of the Social and Industrial Foodservice Institute, Moscow, Russia

Research priorities:

- **Daniel Balaban:** We need to engage governments from the Global South, which are key to accessing quality data.
- **Zhao Chen:** It is fundamental to involve multiple sectors in the thinking of research projects, and work with each institution at the national, regional and local levels to collect data.
- **Vladimir Chernigov:** Research should explore areas where modern technology can increase efficiency and transparency, as well as models that reduce energy consumption and carbon footprint.

Panel 2: Research priorities in school-based delivery of health and nutrition

Chair: Prof. Rashida Ferrand, International Health, LSHTM and BRTL, Zimbabwe

Panellists:

- **Prof. Elizabeth Kristjansson**, Centre for Research in Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa, Canada
- **Dr. Meseret Zelalem**, Director, Maternal, Child and Nutrition Directorate, Federal Ministry of Health, Ethiopia
- **Dr. Ole Norheim**, Director of the Bergen Center for Ethics and Priority Setting, Norway

Research priorities:

- More cost-effectiveness analyses are needed: we need to quantify the cost and the effectiveness of programmes, calculate trade-offs, and determine how to make school feeding

more cost-effective. Another important question is: do these programmes really help marginalized children reach their full potential and catch-up with more privileged children?

- School health and nutrition demands multi-sectoral coordination and research can help strengthen this juncture. Governments cannot accommodate and afford standalone programmes.
- A literature review is timely and requires working with implementers and governments to address challenges at the country level, so that we can present compelling arguments to decision-makers. We need a partnership between policymakers, implementers, programmers and scientists to set the right priorities.

Panel 3: Research priorities for the whole school: Exploring the consequences of the health and nutrition of the learner for education outcomes

Chair: Prof. Chris Bonell, Public Health Sociology, LSHTM

Panellists:

- **Moitsephi Matsheng**, Chair of Youth Council, Botswana
- **Dr. Noam Angrist**, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
- **Dr. Stéphane Verguet**, Department of Global Health and Population, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Research Priorities:

- It is essential to look at nutrition and different ways to benefit young people, especially in marginalized communities, and design rations and other programmatic features that can address the specific challenges of each country.
- There is more impact data than cost data in the existing literature – more evidence on cost is required. School feeding and learning have positive interactions but they are not well-known so we need more evidence on how school feeding impacts learning and how this impact is attained.
- It is important to work on best buys, namely, health interventions that lead to better education outcomes, and conversely, we need to understand the cost of DALYs averted and LAYS gained. Essential dimensions are equity, efficiency, social protection aspects, and returns to local economies.

Panel 4: Research priorities in value for money: estimating the multi-sectoral returns of school health and nutrition programmes

Chair: Dr. Bibi Giyose, Senior Advisor for Food and Nutrition Security, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)

Panellists:

- **Prof. Alan Jackson**, International Union of Nutrition Science
- **Prof. Francis Zotor**, African Nutrition Society, Ghana

- **Sylvie Avallone**, SupAgro Montpellier, France

Research priorities:

- Research should focus on enabling people to take responsibility for their own decisions and understand the nature of the challenges they face.
- Researchers should establish a multi-sectoral network to bring about a change and renew school health and nutrition governance and accountability through better implementation and monitoring.
- Researchers should find win-win situations, where all stakeholders and sectors benefit from health, nutrition and learning outcomes. An inter-disciplinary vision and approach is necessary.

Panel 5: Research priorities for data and evidence to promote multi-sectoral coordination

Chair: Carmen Burbano, Director of School-Based Programmes, WFP

Speakers:

- **Anshu Banerjee**, Director, Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health and Ageing, WHO, Geneva
- **Fatima Hachem**, School Food and Nutrition Taskforce, FAO, Rome
- **Christopher Castle**, Chief of Health and Education, UNESCO, Paris
- **Stuart James Cameron**, Global Partnership for Education, Washington, DC
- **Fatima Barry**, Health, Nutrition and Population Specialist, World Bank, Washington, DC
- **Victor Aguayo**, Chief, Nutrition, Associate Director, Programme Division, UNICEF, New York

Research priorities:

- **Anshu Banerjee:** Key research gaps include: research prioritization; investments promoting accountability through measurement, standard-setting and accountability frameworks; a better understanding of the role of digital health and how to deliver it to school-aged children; and research looking at cognitive outcomes as well as physical outcomes.
- **Fatima Hachem:** We would like to focus research in determining the effectiveness of school-based food education. Research should measure the contribution of school meals diets and their impact on food behaviors, especially for multi-component interventions.
- **Christopher Castle:** There are four research priorities in this area: What is the added value of integrated programmes and how their impacts differentiate along education levels? What are the costs and benefits of these interventions? What are the factors that lead to sustainable implementation at scale in various settings? Which new technologies can contribute to improving school health?
- **Stuart James Cameron:** School health and nutrition research priorities include equity impacts of school health and nutrition programmes; scale and sustainability especially for programmes financed nationally; crisis-resilient systems that keep working even if schools have to close; delivery and effectiveness in fragile and conflict-affected contexts; and how to reach out-of-school children.

- **Fatima Barry:** It is a research priority in public health to understand how we can make schools not only a platform for learning but a protection for children, and how we can make these institutions more resilient during crises. Researching the effectiveness of certain school health policies and programmes would be essential, especially for adolescents.
- **Victor Aguayo:** Three important priorities include reliable data on the nutritional status of school-aged children, similar to the data available for under-five children; reliable and standardized data on their diets; and reliable data on the effectiveness and cost of school-based nutrition programmes.