

# **Nutrition Thematic Working Group**

## **State of Palestine**

### **Terms of Reference**

## **Background**

Political turmoil in State of Palestine has seriously impact the development of quality health and nutrition care services. This was further aggravated by the conflict on Gaza in 2014, which has affected the health and wellbeing of the entire population. Concern has increased about potential nutritional repercussions, and a deterioration of the nutritional status of vulnerable groups including pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children less than 5 years old<sup>1</sup> particularly focusing on first 1000 days of child's life. In Gaza Strip, 38.2% and in Wet Bank 38.8% of infants under the age of 5 months are exclusively breastfed and 95.8% of mothers started breastfeeding immediately after delivery. Similarly, <sup>2</sup>anemia, vitamin A, D, E and zinc remains a public health problem with (26.5 %, 72.9%, 60 %, 64%, and 56% are respectively of children 6 to 59 months) and 30.9% of pregnant women are anemic and 29% of lactating mother (mild and moderate). Under nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, from conception to early years, has deleterious effects on overall child growth and development.

The Nutrition Thematic Working Group has been active in State of Palestine since 2007, while the Health and Nutrition Cluster has been active since January 2009 in response to the humanitarian crisis that ensued from the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip. The HSWG has provided an essential framework for coordination and partnership between the various health actors involved in the developmental health and nutritional agenda, as well as humanitarian response in State of Palestine.

Currently, the Health Sector represents a partnership of nearly 50 organizations: local and international nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies that are committed to working together to provide needs-driven and evidence-based health and nutrition programming and responses in State of Palestine by increasing synergies between individual partner projects and reducing duplications and redundancies. The sector-working group is co-chaired by WHO and the Ministry of Health to ensure alignment with national policies and plans.

To better ensure coordination of nutrition related activities in State of Palestine, and to ensure that nutrition remains on the national agenda, the Nutrition Thematic Working Group (NTWG) has been formed as a sub group from the HSWG. The NTWG will be co-led by MOH and UNICEF. The NTWG will be reporting on developmental aspects to the Health Sector working group by MOH, while UNICEF will report on humanitarian issues to the cluster. The working group will provide an update at the different forum as required.

The NTWG will support the following developmental and humanitarian strategic priorities of the Health Sector and Cluster, specifically in the area of nutrition as following:

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<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau Statistical (PCBS).

<sup>2</sup> Palestinian Micronutrient Survey, UNICEF and MOH, 2014

### **Developmental strategic priorities:**

- Identification of nutritional trends (nutritional surveillance) and underlying causes.
- Prevention and treatment of micronutrient deficiencies (micronutrient supplementation, food fortification and dietary diversification).
- Prevention and treatment of obesity and dietary-related non-communicable diseases, enhancing the diet and physical activity program, reduction of salt and trans-fatty acids and saturated fatty acids intake.
- Protection, promotion and support for exclusive breastfeeding (up to 6 months), appropriate, safely and timely complementary feeding of infants and diet diversity for children.
- Growth monitoring among children up to 5 year.
- Improve food and nutrition services in hospitals.
- Management of severe and moderate malnutrition.
- Promote and ensure appropriate nutrition among schoolchildren.
- Improvement and protection of food security.

### **Humanitarian strategic priorities:**

- To provide essential nutrition services in the vulnerable communities in the State of Palestine.
- To ensure that the nutrition partners and vulnerable communities are better prepared to predict, prevent and respond to the current and the potential new crises.

### **Objective:**

Provide a forum for coordination, exchange, and problem solving among government, UN, and non-governmental organizations implementing nutrition-specific developmental interventions and under emergency in State of Palestine and within the scope of health sector / cluster.

### **Activities:**

- To represent the nutrition agenda within the Health and Nutrition Sector / Cluster, and follow up on technical and policy issues raised within the sector / cluster forum;
- To provide updates at the Health and Nutrition Sector / Cluster meetings on any key discussion items from the nutrition working group;
- To keep the nutrition partners of the thematic working group informed of developments in nutrition programming both globally and locally;
- To harmonize work and approaches of different players in nutrition and make sure follow up on same protocols and guidelines
- To exchange nutrition performance data on a quarterly or bi-monthly basis;
- To discuss implementation challenges and cooperation with other sub-group members to overcome those challenges;
- To share program plans and identify areas for cooperation and alignment;
- To develop jointly with key players in nutrition an annual Action Plan with the 4Ws identifying who is doing what, where and when in State of Palestine. .
- To support nutrition assessments both in developmental status and in conflict situations.
- To identify capacity gaps, develop strategies, and build capacity to improving monitoring, evaluation, and coordinated delivery of nutrition interventions.
- To develop a nutrition-specific Emergency Preparedness Response Plan (EPRP) in order to be better prepared, as well as to respond to emergencies as a coordinated effort;

- To support the implementation of the National Regulation for Marketing of Breast Milk Substitute and report violations to Nutrition Department / MoH.

### **Current representation in the group**

**Thematic Working Group Members:** Sub-group membership will include interested stakeholders directly engaged in the delivery of nutrition interventions in development and under emergency including: government, donor agencies, faith-based organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. NTWG membership will be granted to organizations rather than individuals; however, each organization will be asked to nominate one focal person to ensure consistency in representation and facilitate communication. NTWG members will agree to regularly attend sub-group meetings, endorse the sub-group ToR, and contribute to the realization of the ToR.

### **Coordination:**

The Nutrition Thematic Working Group will be a sub-group of the Health and Nutrition Sector / Cluster. The group will be co-led by the Palestinian MoH, and UNICEF, whom will both co-chair the meetings, jointly between West Bank and Gaza. . The chair will work closely with the sector and cluster coordinator. The Nutrition Thematic Working Group coordination team (MoH, and UNICEF) will be responsible for circulation of minutes, agenda, invitations and other related documents.