

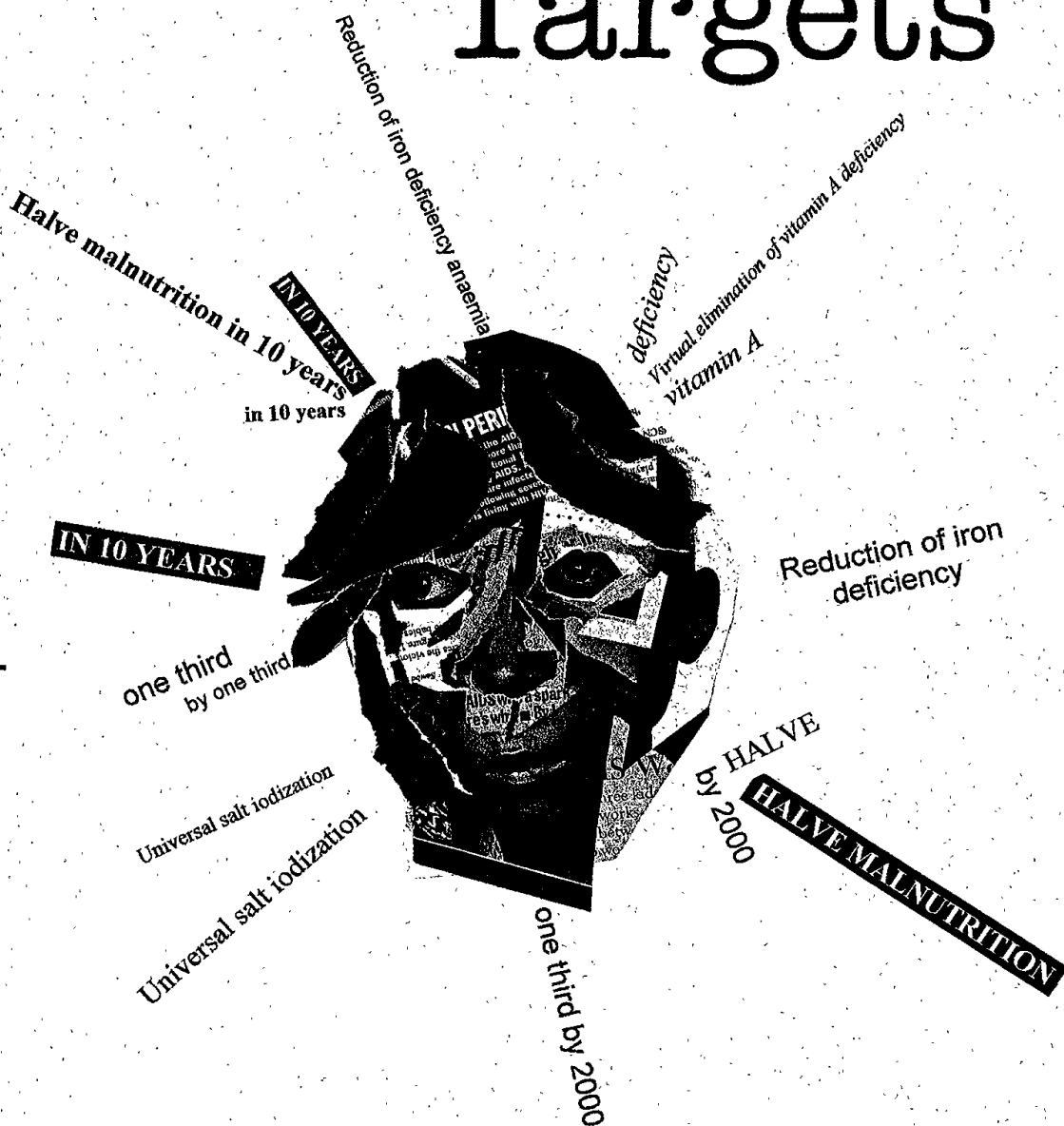


# Nutrition

# Goals

# and

# Targets



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SCN NEWS  
a periodic review of developments in international nutrition

# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO AN INFORMAL SURVEY EXPLORING FIELD WORKERS' OPINION ON NUTRITION GOALS AND TARGETS

*Questionnaires were sent by Email to 25 field workers—eight in the Americas, ten in Asia and seven in Africa. Of these, ten responded: seven from Asia, two from Africa and one from Latin America.*

The preamble of the questionnaire simply read as follows: THE SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN CALLED BY UNICEF IN 1990, THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION IN 1992 AND THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT IN 1996 SET SOME IMPORTANT NUTRITION GOALS FOR THE 90s AND BEYOND. GIVE US YOUR EXPERIENCE-BASED OPINION ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. IN YOUR COUNTRY, HAVE NUTRITION GOALS AND TARGETS HELPED US ACCELERATE ACTIONS OR IN ANY OTHER WAY?

*Eight of the respondents answered yes and commented:*

- >Targets became part of national plans of action
- >Yes, particularly the nutrition goals of the *World Summit for Children*
- >Yes, but few translated into country-specific benchmarks
- >They helped to focus and to accelerate actions
- >They found their way into several other development plans
- >They served to remind the governments about commitments they had made in summits
- >They gave breastfeeding and micronutrient interventions a major boost
- >Yes, from them we set our own national goals
- >Targets sensitised top level planners
- >Yes, they created awareness among professionals, but not much at policy level, and government ownership is needed for sustainability
- >Yes, but nutrition has remained within the health sector
- >Yes, we need something to aspire to and to aim for, setting sub-goals has helped countries carry out reality checks of where they are when
- >They also affected NGO plans.

*One respondent answered no and added* nutrition remains everyone's business, but no one's responsibility; setting targets on paper with little follow-up and accountability breeds scepticism.

2. OR HAVE GOALS AND TARGETS HINDERED PROGRESS BY CONCENTRATING OUR EFFORTS MORE ON OUTCOMES THAN ON SUSTAINABLE PROCESSES? IN YOUR SITUATION, ARE NUTRITION GOALS AND TARGETS GUILTY OF PROMOTING VERTICAL THINKING AND HAVE THEY RATHER FOSTERED SILVER BULLET, TECHNICAL FIXES?

*Four respondents answered no and commented:*

- >Internationally set targets are a good starting point
- >They helped primarily in setting up inter-sectoral development plans and, as partners became aware of the roles they were called to play, this ensured horizontal rather than vertical thinking
- >No, but I have to admit that low birth weight, child malnutrition and anaemia turned out to be more complex than what we thought originally and our interventions turned out to be too simplistic
- >Integration has often diluted the success made by vertical programmes, diluting ownership and accountability.

*Five respondents said that it is possible that targets may have fostered verticality and commented:*

- >The response for different goals has been different as regards vertical thinking; for instance, in IDD a focus on outcomes and a sustainable process complemented each other, in VADD and IDA, verticality damaged dietary diversification approaches
- >To tackle immediate, severe problems, vertical programmes are needed, but not otherwise
- >Implementation may have been vertical, but was successful showing that real progress is possible; at least some problems were solved; it is not wise to wait for general development to happen to see advances in human nutrition
- >Although not intended, targets sometimes lead to vertical thinking, as well as to only one ministry being made to take action
- >Focusing on achieving quick outcomes is detrimental in the long run, for example, sustaining the full baby-friendly status of hospitals where personnel was initially trained has turned out to be quite difficult
- >We have concentrated too much on the curative and easily doable preventive aspects; we spent millions of dollars and we often have little to show for it.

*One respondent definitely thinks targets have fostered verticality and added that there is a clear tendency to seek quick fixes, and such an approach is least likely to succeed and produce long-lasting changes.*

3. THESE GOALS AND TARGETS WERE THERE, BUT I (WE) NEVER BOTHERED TOO MUCH WITH THEM. (TRUE OR FALSE)

*Seven respondents thought this was false and commented:*

- >They did become an integral part of tracking progress
- >They have been central to our work on micronutrients
- >Focusing on general economic improvements hinders simple actions towards progress in human nutrition.

*One respondent thought this was partially true and added many people care about goals, but their voices are not heard and do not get translated into fully implemented actions; caring is not enough to move things forward so people tend to lose faith.*

*One respondent thought it was true and added not many implementers are bothered. Focusing on targets results in too many players without clearly identified responsibilities.*

4. HAVE NUTRITION GOALS AND TARGETS BEEN GOOD FOR YOU TO USE AS ADVOCACY/SOCIAL MOBILISATION TOOLS FOR NATIONAL DECISION-MAKERS? HAVE THEY BEEN GOOD TO MOBILISE COMMUNITIES?, DID USING THEM MAKE AN EXTRA DIFFERENCE? DID THEY FOSTER QUANTUM LEAP IMPROVEMENTS IN NUTRITION WORK IN YOUR COUNTRY?

*Seven respondents said yes to all questions and commented:*

- >These goals do carry weight; our job is to help put into place review processes so that they are treated as serious commitments
- >They moved nutrition work forward in our country
- >They helped sensitise policy makers and programme implementers, as well as to mobilise thousands of volunteers for the VADD programme; but goals need to be interpreted locally if the community is to be mobilised; otherwise, people feel these targets are imposed from outside
- >To know that some actions are part of a global effort carried out in many other countries as well helped for advocacy.

*Two respondents had mixed responses to the questions and commented:*

- >Yes for the decision-makers, but not for communities; quantum leaps were only seen in iodised salt and vitamin A coverage
- >Yes, they helped strengthen certain components in government programmes, but no, they have not worked to mobilise communities; it is difficult for communities to understand the long-term implications and no one is explaining these to them; There have not been any quantum leaps in our country.

*One person said 'not so far' to all questions and added there has been political and economic turmoil in his country so that it has been difficult, if not impossible, to make a strong case for nutrition programmes.*

5. DO WE NEED UPDATED NUTRITION GOALS AND TARGETS FOR 2015? WOULD A NEW SET OF NUTRITION GOALS AND TARGETS FOR 2015 MOBILISE LEADERS, THE MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY MORE UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN 2000? IS IT WORTH SPENDING TIME AND MONEY IN SETTING THESE NEW GOALS? OR SHOULD WE DEEMPHASISE THE USE OF GOALS AND TARGETS IN NUTRITION WORK OVERALL? WHY?

*Seven respondents said they were needed and commented:*

- >Updated goals are key to monitor performance; we should compare success and failure experiences so far to learn how goals helped or not
- >The new set of goals has to get a broader commitment at country level; our job is to keep them in the agenda
- >Yes, but we have to make them more relevant to the current circumstances, look at emerging issues and think of innovative ways of addressing them; do not de-emphasise the use of goals, they are important also in getting various countries to address common issues across countries
- >Updated goals need to be realistic if they are going to keep out interest

- >Yes, but it is essential this time to support all new goals with resources to implement the activities called for
- >Yes, but beware, summits are not followed by making available the needed resources; summits are forgotten except for the few of us who have to do the follow up; many countries do not keep their promises; also, governments change; how do we make sure that the next government will keep the promise?; we should look for more innovative ways of getting people on board again
- >Yes, but new goals should not be arrived at by a few bureaucrats, academics and senior programme staff, but should include people with practical field experience and grassroots representatives.

*Two respondents said they are not needed and commented:*

- >Setting new goals will cost money and precious time; just admit our inability to reach the goals on schedule; give broader time frames that are country-specific
- >Although noble, goals mean little; they encourage grossly inaccurate data to be used as barometers; better focus on processes to achieve change; targets must always go together with an enunciation of the actions needed to achieve them.