



The economic and human capital benefits of investing in nutrition

BACKGROUND

Through the development of an online, user-friendly Cost of Inaction Tool, Nutrition International has sought to support policymakers as they weigh their options. The tool provides an analysis of the costs of “inaction” – of allowing limited to no progress on key indicators of undernutrition to be made – and how doing so affects countries’ income in both the immediate and long term. The new tool demonstrates that investments in nutrition can generate significant economic savings, as long as smart investments are made in proven, low-cost and high-impact nutrition interventions.

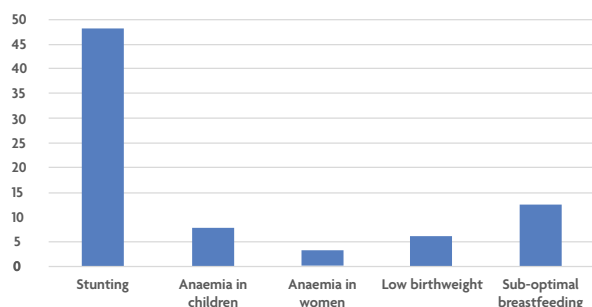
THE FINDINGS

Nigeria has taken actions to help improve nutrition in the country. The National Policy on Food and Nutrition (2016-2025) aims to achieve optimal nutritional status for all Nigerians, with a particular emphasis on underserved groups like children, adolescents, women, elderly and groups with special nutritional needs. Nigeria's Agricultural Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (2016-2025) serves as a guiding document for integrating nutrition into agricultural policies, programs and value chains, addressing the country's persistent nutrition challenges. It aims to mobilize resources and support effective interventions by federal and state ministries of agriculture and rural development.⁶





ECONOMIC COST OF INACTION IN NIGERIA, USD \$ MILLION PER YEAR



*** The total economic cost is lower than the sum of each individual cost. This estimate avoids double counting of costs associated with co-occurrence of stunting, anaemia, low birthweight and sub-optimal breastfeeding.**

Nigeria has the fourth highest prevalence of anaemia in adolescent girls and women in the world and the third highest in the region of sub-Saharan Africa. With a current prevalence of 55.1%, Nigeria's progress has slightly worsened against the 2012 prevalence of 54.9%.⁷

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING GLOBAL NUTRITION TARGETS

Here are some of the benefits that Nigeria stands to realize if the proposed extended 2030 global nutrition targets were to be met.

If Nigeria was to meet the proposed 2030 WHA global nutrition target on stunting, an estimated 1.4 million cases of stunting would be averted annually, preventing 144,000 deaths, the loss of 14 million IQ points and 2.2 million school years. Overall, this would prevent USD \$28 billion in economic losses.

If Nigeria was to meet the proposed 2030 WHA global nutrition target on anaemia, an estimated 14 million cases of anaemia would be averted annually, preventing USD \$1.6 billion in economic losses.

If Nigeria was to meet the proposed 2030 WHA global nutrition target on exclusive breastfeeding, 1.3 million cases of diarrhoea would be averted annually, preventing 30,000 deaths, the loss of 7.9 million IQ points and USD \$6 billion in economic losses.

NUTRITION FOR GROWTH

The next edition of the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit will take place on March 27–28, 2025, in Paris. N4G Paris will be a multi-stakeholder summit that provides an opportunity for ambitious policy and financial pledges from different actors from all continents to move the nutrition agenda forward: governments, international organizations, research institutions, civil society organizations, philanthropies, private sector organizations and many more.

As the 2025 N4G Summit approaches, Nutrition International and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) are partnering to highlight the price of not investing in nutrition and to encourage ambitious commitment-making on nutrition at N4G Paris.

ABOUT NUTRITION INTERNATIONAL'S TOOLS

The Nutrition International Cost of Inaction Tool was developed in 2023 by Nutrition International, in partnership with Limestone Analytics and with funding from the Government of Canada. The Cost of Not Breastfeeding Tool was created in 2017 by Alive & Thrive, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and it was updated by Nutrition International and Alive & Thrive in partnership with Limestone Analytics in 2022, with funding from Government of Canada. Both tools present results for over 140 countries to see the potential benefits if action is taken now. All estimates included in this brief are as of September 2023. Visit both tools on Nutrition International's website to read about the methodology and data sources and to learn more about Nutrition International.

For further support, including additional analyses, tool demonstrations and technical assistance, you can reach out to Nutrition International at healthecon@nutritionintl.org.

[Cost of Inaction Tool](#)

[Cost of Not Breastfeeding Tool](#)

REFERENCES

- 1 World Health Assembly. (2024). Discussion paper: 2025–2030 World Health. Assembly global maternal, infant and young child nutrition targets and proposal for process indicators. World Health Assembly.
- 2 Global Nutrition Report. (2024). Country nutrition profiles. Global Nutrition Report. [Global Nutrition Report | Country Nutrition Profiles - Global Nutrition Report](#)
- 3 Jain S., Ahsan S., Robb Z., Crowley B., Walters D. (2024). The cost of inaction: A global tool to inform nutrition policy and investment decisions on global nutrition targets. Health Policy and Planning, Jul 17: czae056. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czae056>
- 4 Country-wise data is not available on anaemia rates in younger adolescent girls (10–14y).
- 5 Shekar, M., Shibata Okamura, K., Vilar-Compte, M., Dell'Aira, C. (Eds.). (2024). Investment framework for nutrition 2024. World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/42164>
- 6 Vanderkooy, A.; Verstraeten, Roosmarijn; Adeyemi, O.; Covic, Namukolo; Becquey, Elodie; Diatta, Ampa Dogui; Diop, Loty; and Touré, Mariama. 2019. Nutrition policy in Nigeria. TNWA Evidence Note 2. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). <https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.133284>
- 7 World Health Organization. (n.d.). Global nutrition targets tracking tool. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/data/nutrition/tracking-tool>

