



Micronutrient Forum Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Dialogue and collective action to promote health and well-being



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A Shared Mandate

This strategy was developed through an assessment of the current gaps in the nutrition and micronutrient landscape, coupled with the ambitions of the Advisory Council, insights generously provided by the broader nutrition community through stakeholder interviews and draft reviews, and with the historical activities and strengths of the Forum in mind.

This plan has a three-year lifespan, during which time we are committed to making demonstrable progress, in collaboration with many other thoughtful and dedicated organizations, towards meaningful improvements in the lives of vulnerable populations. Our vision is a world where all people have optimal micronutrient status for health and well-being.

Achieving this vision is not an ambition: it's a mandate.

Micronutrient adequacy is fundamental to enabling individuals and society to reach their potential. The Sustainable Development Goals have created space for multi-sectoral and cross-discipline collaboration, and the nature of nutrition demands collaboration to make sustainable advances in micronutrient status. The only way to accomplish this mandate is to collaborate with colleagues who work in nutrition, health, agriculture, education, and economics – across private, academic, and public sector communities.

Our name - the Micronutrient Forum - succinctly captures what we do: we provide a platform for the exchange of evidence and ideas on micronutrients. We have always aimed to bring our micronutrient technical, programmatic, and policy-related expertise to stakeholders across the nutrition and global health continuum, and this plan constitutes a redoubling of those efforts to ensure a virtuous cycle among research, policy, and implementation.

This document expresses our ambition, competencies, and strategy, and we look forward to collaborating to ensure people around the world have optimal micronutrient status to thrive in their health and livelihoods.

The Micronutrient Forum Advisory Council

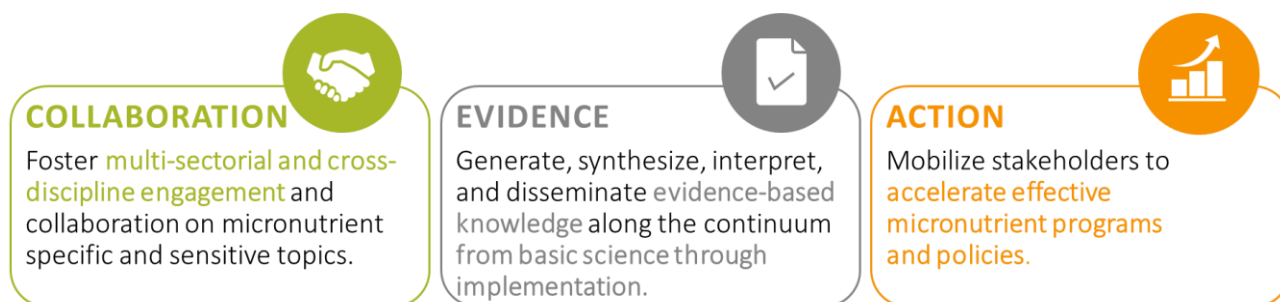
November 5, 2018
Washington, D.C.

Executive Summary

Founded in 2006, the Micronutrient Forum (the Forum) has been an active convener and technical resource focused on micronutrients within the larger nutrition and global development ecosystem. Having held four successful global conferences with thousands of attendees from across the globe and conducted several successful consultations to create and disseminate evidence-based knowledge and promote the scale-up of impactful micronutrient programs, the Forum is well known for its technical expertise, impartiality, and ability to facilitate challenging conversation.

As the nutrition landscape evolves, with many organizations taking a more integrated approach to nutrition, the Forum believes that now more than ever it is crucial for technical micronutrient knowledge to be available to implementors, policymakers, and others who work on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive policies and programs.

To accomplish its vision, the Forum developed a strategy to leverage its role as a coordinating body to facilitate and coordinate dialogue and collective action to ensure efforts to support micronutrient health are evidence-based, comprehensive, cost-efficient, and effective. The Forum has identified three key Strategic Goals:



With these goals in place the Forum will build on its track record of delivering the following three products:



Most importantly, this strategy demands that the Forum take a multi-sectoral and cross-disciplinary approach. Working to link knowledge to impact means that the Forum will champion micronutrient evidence by bringing together key stakeholders, from researchers to policymakers to implementors, to translate research into actionable recommendations and guidelines for implementation at the regional- and country-level.

Micronutrient Malnutrition: The Need

A Global Problem

Malnutrition is a global problem, facing every country and population on the planet. Nutrition was heavily integrated into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because of the foundational impact that nutrition has on every facet of life; according to the World Health Organization (WHO), good nutrition is required to meet 12 of the 17 SDGs.¹ Proper micronutrient nutrition is essential for creating healthier and more productive lives and societies, but there is much we don't know. The consequences of micronutrient deficiencies are severe (death, disability, and impaired neuro-cognitive development), and the prevalence of deficiency seems to be high, although current estimates are based on very limited data and implementation experience.²

Why Have Micronutrients Not Been A Priority?

Investment into micronutrients represents an opportunity to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. According to the 2008 and 2012 Copenhagen Consensuses, micronutrient interventions are the most cost-effective investments in all global health.^{3,4} Yet not enough progress has been made. A combination of **evidence and knowledge gaps**, the inherently **multi-sectoral nature of potential solutions**, and a **lack of cohesive advocacy** have limited progress towards micronutrient-related goals.

“Nutrition is a complex topic. We take that for granted. We have the responsibility to translate that complexity into something that is relevant and understandable to those who, by virtue of their resources or power, can use this tool of nutrition to change the world in a single generation.”

Anthony Hehir, Director of Nutrition Improvement Program and DSM Nutritional Products. Remarks at the Micronutrient Forum Global Conference in Cancún in 2016.

Opportunity for Action

To identify and fill these knowledge gaps, foster multi-sectoral action, and organize advocacy, the Micronutrient Forum will be a global catalyst for expanding the understanding of the role of micronutrients in human health and promoting effective and safe interventions that will achieve micronutrient adequacy. The Forum does not implement programs directly. Instead, it facilitates dialogue and collaboration among researchers, program implementers, the private sector, and policymakers and disseminates relevant information and provides technical assistance to maximize the impact and cost-effectiveness of the money spent on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions.

The Forum provides technical expertise to backstop partners and uses its convening power to ensure that relevant disciplines and sectors are engaged in addressing micronutrient malnutrition.

¹ World Health Organization. United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition. <http://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/en/>. Accessed October 27, 2018.

² Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs. http://165.227.233.32/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Report_2017-2.pdf. Accessed October 27, 2018.

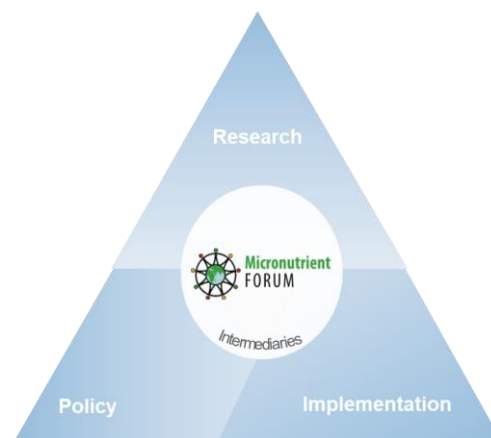
³ Copenhagen Consensus. Copenhagen Consensus 2008 - Results. https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/cc08_results_final_0.pdf. Accessed on October 27, 2018.

⁴ Copenhagen Consensus. Copenhagen Consensus 3 - Outcome. <https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/copenhagen-consensus-iii/outcome>. Accessed on October 27, 2018.

Background: A Collaborative Endeavor

Founding

Established in 2006 as the result of a merger between the International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG) and the International Nutritional Anemia Consultative Group (INACG), the Forum held successful global meetings in Istanbul in 2007 and Beijing in 2009. In 2011, a group of leaders in the field produced a report supporting the need for the Forum due to its usefulness as a means for exchanging scientific, implementation, and policy information on micronutrients among scientists and public health professionals. Specifically, the report recommended that the Forum focuses on: scaling up of effective programs; improved biomarkers, program monitoring and evaluation; and multi-sectoral integration of micronutrient activities.



The Forum works with research, implementation and policy groups to fill knowledge gaps, improve collaboration, and reduce overlaps.

The Nutrition Landscape

There are many dedicated organizations and departments within development agencies addressing micronutrient malnutrition, but there is a limited civil society voice and relatively weak industry engagement. The micronutrient landscape is comprised primarily of researchers, implementation-focused organizations, and some policymakers with intermediaries such as funders playing a crucial role in agenda-setting across the community. Implementing organizations that have traditionally had micronutrient-specific programs are moving towards more integrated approaches. There are fewer technical organizations dedicated to the foundational research, policy, implementation, and resource priorities that underpin effective progress toward micronutrient adequacy. Of these organizations, the Forum is only one that works across the range of all vitamins and minerals, offering an important opportunity for scale and coordination.

Recent Progress

Between 2011 and the end of 2018, the Forum was hosted by Nutrition International (previously known as the Micronutrient Initiative), and the organization was directed by a volunteer Steering Committee with a small technical and administrative staff. This period included two successful Global Conferences, Addis Ababa in 2014 and Cancún in 2016, that brought together thousands of delegates from 78 countries to engage with more than 200 speakers. In addition to the conferences, the Forum has collaborated with partners to complete the following work:

- Consultation on folate status in women and neural tube defects risk-reduction ([Overview](#))
- Web-based global compilation of fortification coverage indicators ([GFDx Website](#))
- Consultation on evidence-based tools for decision-making in nutrition programs ([Overview](#))
- Symposium on Integration to Effective Implementation (I to I) on Vitamin A ([Overview](#))

During this time, the Forum developed a reputation as a trusted intermediary by bringing diverse groups together, providing technical depth on a range of micronutrients, and catalyzing challenging but necessary conversations. As the only micronutrient focused convening organization with a global and multi-sectoral reach that works across the range of vitamins and minerals, the Forum is uniquely positioned as the go-to resource for micronutrient related dialogue and evidence synthesis.

Bright Future

Stakeholder interviews and a landscape analysis conducted in early 2018 explore the need for the Forum to serve as a technical expert and voice for the importance of micronutrients. To ensure the Forum delivers value to the nutrition community and is well-positioned to execute this strategic plan, it implemented the following key organizational changes:

- **Leadership Development:** The Advisory Council (formerly the Steering Committee) adopted a development plan to identify and actively fill skill gaps and increase the geographic, age, and sectoral representation of the Council. Three new members have been recruited, and a pipeline of several dozen candidates will be considered over the coming months. Greater diversity will ensure the leadership represents the diverse stakeholders the Forum seeks to engage.
- **Professional Management:** A global search resulted in the successful identification and recruitment of Forum's first full-time Executive Director. A full-time Executive Director is crucial to providing continuity and increasing the output of the Forum.
- **Secretariat Host:** After a public call for applicants and a rigorous review process, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has been selected to host the Forum for the next several years. IFPRI will provide the Forum with administrative services, as well as programmatic complementarity and a stimulating intellectual and multi-sectoral environment for the Forum's staff. This host relationship will allow the Forum to focus on programmatic work while leveraging highly professional support services.
- **Incorporation:** To support these changes and facilitate fundraising and operations, the Forum registered as a nonprofit organization in the United States. This structure allows for flexibility and transparency.

Together these changes create a more professional and transparent structure for the Forum, ensuring continuity of programs, a consistent presence with partners and funders, and an environment where the organization can aggressively pursue its vision and mission.

Strategy: Linking Knowledge and Impact

The following guiding principles, strategic framework, goals, tactics, and theory of change guide the work that the Forum will undertake to accomplish our mission.

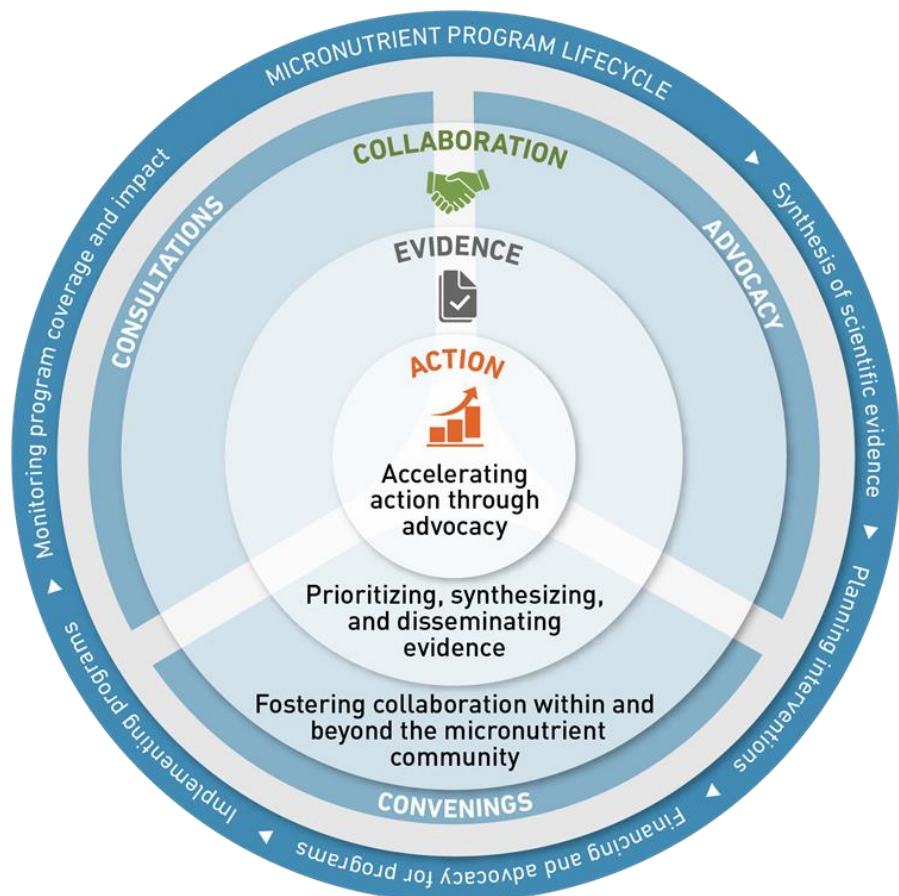
Guiding Principles

Vision	A world where all people have optimal micronutrient status for health and well-being.
Mission	To promote dialogue and collective action on vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients across multiple sectors by bridging nutrition science, policy, programs, and responsible business practices for health and well-being.
Strategy Statement	To facilitate and coordinate dialogue and collective action to ensure efforts to support micronutrient health are evidence-based, comprehensive, cost-efficient, and effective.

Strategic Framework: Connecting Knowledge and Impact Across Disciplines and Sectors

Micronutrients are diverse and have complex interactions on health. As technical micronutrient knowledge continues to evolve, the micronutrient field has acknowledged that biological issues represent only part of what drives outcomes, and even those need to be better understood. To increase impact on vulnerable populations, the field must empower researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who work on food systems, agriculture, economics, education, and health across both the public and private sectors to prioritize and address micronutrient malnutrition.

The Forum's strategy is predicated on the fact that stakeholders in the nutrition field need a sound micronutrient technical resource, and that conversely scientific research should be informed by the needs of stakeholders such as policymakers, implementors, and funders and investors. However, knowledge without action is insufficient. The Forum must also identify knowledge gaps, prioritize, and coordinate and collaborate with others to fill those gaps, and effectively disseminate this new knowledge.



Strategic Goals and Tactics

The following goals and tactics create a framework for the Forum's activities. The implementation of this strategy will create both push and pull mechanisms for engagement (see Products section), but the strategy positions the Forum as a hub for multi-sectoral and cross-discipline engagement to prioritize and directly or indirectly fill knowledge gaps.

Within each goal, the tactics create an ordered process for action. While any given project might fit within one or more goals, and accomplish one or more tactics, this framework offers a lens to develop programmatic work and communicate the activities of the forum externally.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Tactics
<p>COLLABORATION</p> <p>Foster multi-sectoral and cross-discipline engagement and collaboration on micronutrient specific and sensitive topics.</p>	<p>1.1 Build the Micronutrient Forum's capacity to promote multi-disciplinary learning and facilitate action</p> <p>1.2 Nurture capacity and leadership development across the spectrum of organizations and skills necessary for effective micronutrient programs</p> <p>1.3 Facilitate collaboration between organizations working in the micronutrient space</p> <p>1.4 Catalyze and cultivate cross-discipline and multi-sectoral engagement and partnerships at the global and national level (e.g., academia, implementation, private sector, policy, and civil society)</p>
<p>EVIDENCE</p> <p>Generate, synthesize, interpret, and disseminate evidence-based knowledge along the continuum from basic science through implementation.</p>	<p>2.1 Strengthen data generation, monitoring, and analysis for micronutrients</p> <p>2.2 Synthesize existing knowledge to ensure that it is available and actionable to key stakeholders</p> <p>2.3 Identify gaps in current knowledge that are either hindering impact or preventing scale</p>
<p>ACTION</p> <p>Mobilize stakeholders to accelerate effective micronutrient programs and policies.</p>	<p>3.1 Identify and foster solutions to implementation challenges for implementers and policymakers</p> <p>3.2 Disseminate and promote uptake of best practices and examples of micronutrient impact to funders, implementers, policymakers, business, and others</p> <p>3.3 Foster scale-up and sustainability of evidence-based, effective micronutrient programs</p>

Strategic Goals: A Closer Look

The Forum has three interrelated strategic goals that highlight how the Forum will engage with the nutrition and broader global health and development communities.



Collaboration

Foster multi-micronutrient, multi-sectoral, and cross-discipline engagement and collaboration on micronutrient specific and sensitive topics.

Many of the most promising and impactful nutrition and micronutrient solutions are inherently cross-discipline and multi-sectoral. As a coordinating body, the Forum is ideally positioned to create and strengthen linkages between professionals and organizations already working on micronutrients, and those whose work could or should intersect with micronutrient programs and policies.

The Forum's conferences have always included implementors and policymakers and must continue to engage delegates across disciplines and sectors, make certain they find the Global Conference useful and actionable, and ensure the external perception of the conference matches this multi-sectoral and cross-discipline approach.



Evidence

Generate, synthesize, interpret, and disseminate evidence-based knowledge along the continuum from basic science through implementation.

There are knowledge and data gaps throughout the nutrition ecosystem that make it challenging to develop, fund, implement, and evaluate programs. The Forum will take a leadership role in identifying, prioritizing, and addressing these knowledge gaps from a micronutrient perspective. Specifically, the Forum can coordinate the prioritization of knowledge gaps, coordinate the work necessary to fill those gaps, summarize and disseminate knowledge that exists, and advocate for the creation of key micronutrient knowledge.



Action

Mobilize stakeholders to accelerate effective micronutrient programs, and policies.

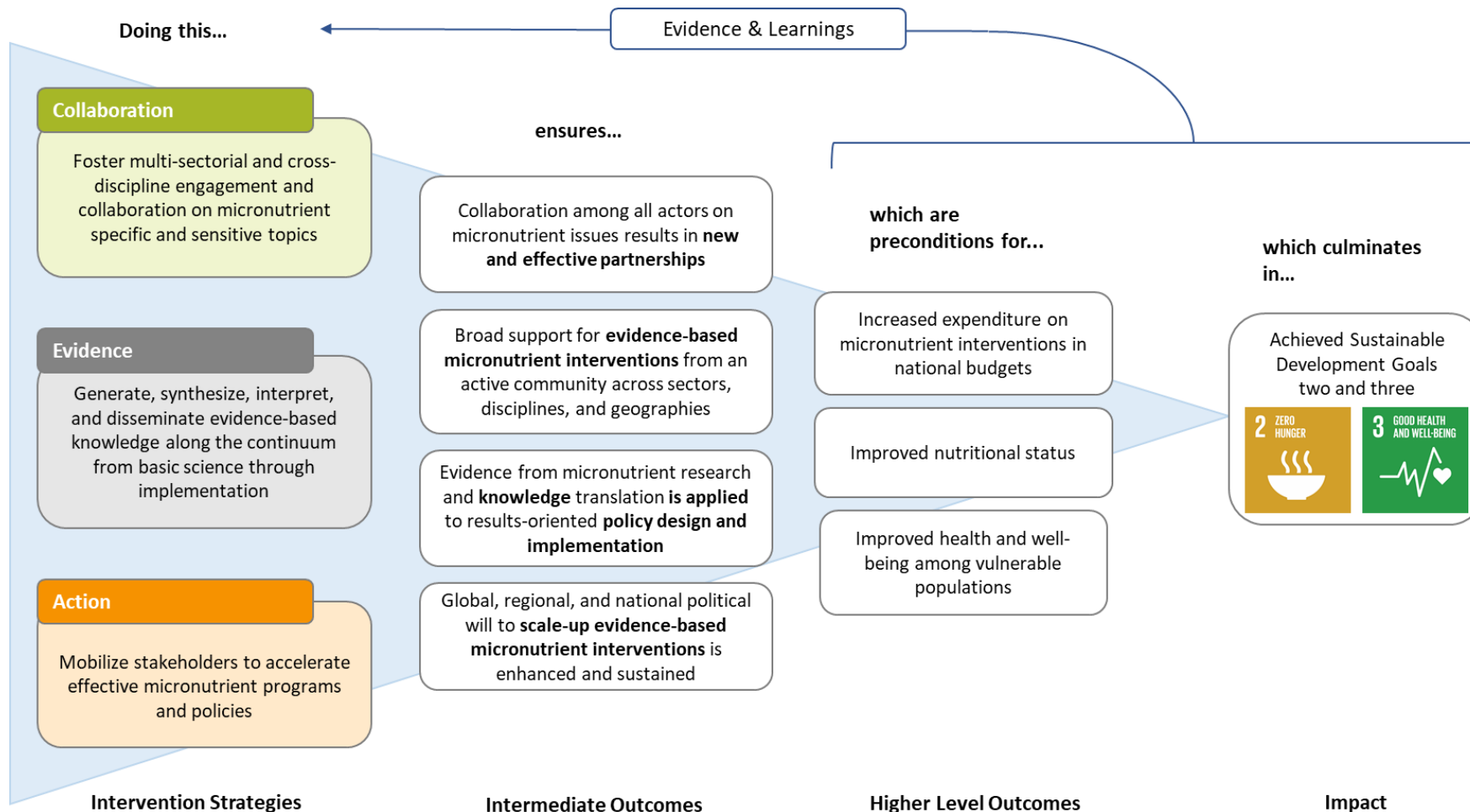
Although the Forum is neither a normative nor implementing body, its activities must drive towards outcomes for vulnerable populations. Knowledge creation and collaboration are a means to an end, improving the lives of vulnerable populations. To accomplish this, the Forum must advocate and mobilize actors and activities. This includes working to make information actionable and broadly available, facilitating important conversations with the right participants, and coordinating efforts at a global level across micronutrient or intervention silos.

The Forum is committed to engaging and supporting the organizations who have a direct impact on policies, programs, and responsible business models, to ensure their work is as informed, effective, and efficient as possible. This work is critical at the global and national level.

Theory of Change

The Forum is committed to using its convening and consultative abilities to collaborate with the broader nutrition and development communities to drive impact. The SDGs serve as a focal point for these communities and supporting the achievement of these goals is a unifying desire. The following Theory of Change outlines how the Forum’s strategic goals will drive specific and measurable outcomes, and ultimately impact.

As a convener, the Forum’s work falls under SDG Goal 17 – Partnerships. As such, we aim to pay special attention to cost-effectiveness and overall program coherence, avoiding duplication in effort, and identifying gaps in program coverage.



Products: A Closer Look

Based on the needs of the ecosystem and the Forum's strengths, the organization seeks to serve in both a proactive and responsive role to ensure that micronutrient knowledge is available and used, and that interventions that address micronutrient status are prioritized. To do so, the Forum will offer the following products:



Advocacy

Micronutrient science and evidence can be challenging to navigate for even the most experienced and dedicated policymakers. The community needs to synthesize and disseminate knowledge in an accessible and strategic manner to promote uptake of effective and emerging recommendations.

The Forum was instrumental in developing the Global Fortification Data Exchange (GFDx), an initiative to make micronutrient fortification information available to the broader nutrition and policy communities. Moving forward, the Forum will continue to, directly and indirectly, support micronutrient knowledge and action through such potential deliverables as supporting micronutrient or intervention specific working groups, publishing a topical newsletter, or identifying opportunities to collect micronutrient status in household surveys.



Consultations

The Forum has a broad and diverse network and a strong track record of successfully addressing open questions about micronutrients by engaging leading experts in creating frameworks and roadmaps for action. As organizations take a more holistic approach to nutrition, a trend that the Forum supports, the nutrition ecosystem needs a credible and responsive technical expert hub.

The Forum will continue to use technical consultations to shape and set collaborative agendas across its network, to inform and deliver advocacy, and to respond to priority questions from implementors and policymakers eager to move evidence to action. Deliverables include publications, presentations, tools such as websites or survey modules, and policy briefs.



Convenings

Bringing together multi-sectorial and cross-discipline audiences is fundamental to planning and scaling interventions. The Forum creates the space and an environment where knowledge and ideas can flow between technical experts, implementors, and policymakers, in both directions.

The Forum has produced four successful biennial global conferences, using the location, theme, and tracks to highlight and address key issues among the micronutrient community. The Forum will hold its fifth Global Conference in March 2020 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Annex

Stakeholder Interview Participants

Name and Title	Organization
Gilles Bergeron Executive Director	The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science
Jack Castle & David Eastman Associate Director, Investments & Associate Director, M&E	Power of Nutrition
Mary Pat Cornette Vice President, Meetings & International Affairs	American Society for Nutrition
Alessandro Demaio CEO	EAT
Augustine Flory Managing Director, Nutrition	Results for Development
Patrizia Fracassi Senior Nutrition Analyst & Strategy Advisor	SUN Movement Secretariat
Anthony Hehir Director, Nutrition Improvement Program	DSM
Cornelia Loechl Head of the Nutritional and Health-Related Environmental Studies Section, Division of Human Health	International Atomic Energy Agency
Homero Martinez Senior Technical Advisor, TEAM Folate	Nutrition International
Christine McDonald International Zinc Nutrition Consultative Group	IZiNCG
Lisa Rogers Technical Officer, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development	World Health Organization
Dan Roth Assistant Professor, Pediatrics & Nutritional Science	University of Toronto, Pediatrics Hospital for Sick Children
Lara Steinhouse Health Specialist	Global Affairs Canada
Parminder Suchdev Associate Director of the Emory Global Health Institute	Rollins School of Public Health
Steve Vosti Adjunct Professor, Agricultural and Resource Economics	University of California, Davis
Michael B Zimmermann Professor of Human Nutrition at the Department of Health Sciences and Technology	ETH Zürich

Leadership

Name and Title	Organization
Howarth Bouis <i>Chair</i>	HarvestPlus, International Food Policy Research Institute
Lynnette Neufeld <i>Past Chair</i>	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
Clayton Ajello	Vitamin Angels
Lindsay Allen	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service
Maria Isabel vaz de Andrade	International Potato Center
Kenneth Brown	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Maria Elena Jefferds <i>Conference Program Committee Chair</i>	U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Klaus Kraemer	Sight and Life
Katharine Kreis	PATH
Roland Kupka	UNICEF
Daniel Raiten	National Institutes of Health
Emorn Udomkesmalee <i>Conference Local Organizing Committee Co-Chair</i>	Mahidol University

Acronyms

GFDx:	Global fortification Data Exchange
I to I:	Integration to Effective Implementation
IFPRI:	International Food Policy Research Institute
INACG:	International Nutritional Anemia Consultative Group
IVACG:	International Vitamin A Consultative Group
NI:	Nutrition International (formerly the Micronutrient Initiative)
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
The Forum:	The Micronutrient Forum
WHO:	World Health Organization