

2022-2025 Strategic Plan





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Foreword

from the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board

The Micronutrient Forum leadership developed this 2022-2025 Strategic Plan based on substantial internal and external feedback, informed by all our interactions with partners and stakeholders over the past several years.

Collaboration with partners is at the core of the Forum's work, whether it addresses the dearth of biochemical status data, the scaling of effective micronutrient interventions for pregnant women, our biannual global conference, or modelling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nutrition. We listened carefully to all our partners and learned where there are gaps the Forum should fill. This strategy is informed by their insights and lessons and based on a careful evaluation of where the Forum could add value.

This Strategy was developed for three main stakeholder groups: first, micronutrient-vulnerable populations whose health and well-being we aim to improve; second, partners and stakeholders, including national decision-makers who inform, co-create, and consume our work; and third, the staff and volunteer leadership (Board and Advisory Council) that guide and conduct the work of the Forum. The Forum's work contributes to the enabling environment needed to achieve global nutrition goals, including the only Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) target related to micronutrients (anemia reduction in women of reproductive age) and micronutrient-related N4G commitments, tracked by the Global Nutrition Report. Over the life of this strategy, the Forum will annually survey our partners, leadership, and staff to gauge the effectiveness of our work – an important accountability activity.

The 2022-2025 Strategy represents both the programmatic and operational direction of the Forum as well as a commitment to partners that the Forum will continue to be a collaborative, evidence-driven, action-oriented organization that strives to respond to priorities (national and global) to improve micronutrient nutrition.

Importantly, this Strategy reflects our strong commitment to our vision and mission, and the need for an impartial, evidence-based convener to address pressing issues in micronutrient malnutrition.

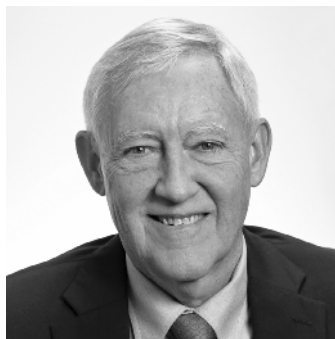
Our work over the next four years will be guided by the proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." We look forward to going far and increasing our impact, together with all our partners and stakeholders.

On behalf of the Micronutrient Forum leadership,



A black and white signature of Saskia Osendarp, written in a cursive style.

Saskia Osendarp, PhD
Executive Director



A black and white signature of Howarth Bouis, written in a cursive style.

Howarth Bouis, PhD
Chair of the Board of Directors

Executive Summary

The Micronutrient Forum (the Forum) serves as a backbone organization by supporting partners and fostering alignment and collective action on micronutrient-relevant issues for all aspects of health and development promotion and disease prevention. The 2022-2025 Strategy is an extension of the existing work of the Forum, building on the organization's capabilities as a micronutrient technical resource, convenor, knowledge broker, and advocate.

Over the past three years, the Forum has delivered unique value to the nutrition community by developing collaboration platforms to address pressing topical issues (Standing Together for Nutrition), responding to the needs of partners for greater collaboration on specific topics (Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies), and by addressing longstanding issues (Biochemical Status Coalition).

The ability to bring key stakeholders together, create alignment, and drive action on challenging micronutrient malnutrition issues is acknowledged by partners and funders as fundamental to achieving impact. In addition, the Forum observed demand for evidence-based advocacy on micronutrients in general and on women's nutrition specifically, and the need for greater connection between the global and national levels.

Moving forward, the Forum will organize its work according to the following themes:

1. **Micronutrient Malnutrition:** The Forum shall continue to engage in work that spans interventions and sub-populations to promote evidence-based activities on micronutrient malnutrition.
2. **Women's Nutrition (focused on micronutrient issues):** Women face unique biological and social factors that cause micronutrient vulnerability and require dedicated action.
3. **Micronutrient Aspects of Emerging Topics:** The Forum shall identify and prioritize key emerging topics for discrete attention to ensure micronutrient elements of emerging topics are addressed.
4. **Prioritizing Data:** Actionable data (defined, harmonized, stratified, and timely) are critical for effective evidence-based policy, program, and budget decisions, but the field is plagued by persistent data gaps due, in part, to a lack of coordination

While the themes organize the Forum's work, the following Strategic Objectives outline what the organization aims to accomplish in the coming four years:

1. **Disseminate Evidence:** The Forum shall generate, synthesize, interpret, and disseminate evidence-based knowledge along the continuum from biological knowledge through program implementation.
2. **Facilitate Collaboration:** The Forum shall foster multisectoral collaboration on micronutrient-specific and sensitive topics.
3. **Strengthen and Integrate Advocacy:** The Forum shall increase global awareness of priorities in micronutrient malnutrition through advocacy conducted with partners.
4. **Accelerate National Progress:** The Forum shall work with and support partners to better meet the needs of targeted national decision-makers and enable national-level progress on micronutrient priorities.



Landscape Overview

Gaps in Micronutrient Nutrition

Public health has developed evidence-based, cost-effective policies and programs to support micronutrient nutrition, some of which are considered the biggest public health success stories of the past few decades, such as the scale-up of universal salt iodization (USI) following the WHO USI policy adoption in 1994.

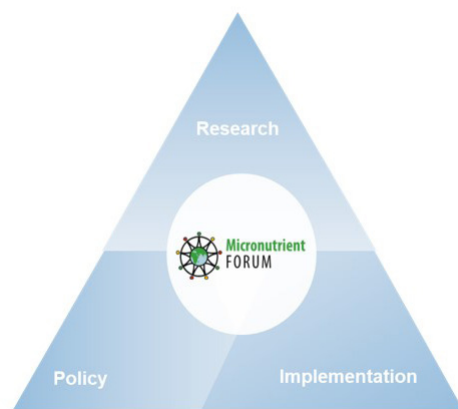
Despite improvements in some nutritional outcomes, the world has not made sufficient progress on micronutrient malnutrition, particularly among women and children. The recent inclusion of Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation for pregnant women in the World Health Organization's global Model List of Essential Medicines in 2021 is a significant step forward in improving maternal nutrition status and pregnancy outcomes globally, but progress has been both uneven and inadequate, particularly for vulnerable communities in low- and middle-income countries where nutrition challenges are anticipated to worsen. As highlighted by the Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium (ST4N), wasting, stunting, and maternal anemia levels are all projected to rise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption to people's access to safe and nutritious foods.

The lack of progress addressing micronutrient malnutrition relates, in part, to the diversity of stakeholders and priorities and the multisectoral nature of nutrition. Addressing micronutrient issues in silos (e.g., by nutrient or intervention type) has proven suboptimal.

Taking Action

Effectively addressing micronutrient malnutrition requires alignment and collective action across diverse stakeholders – such as nutrition-, food-, health- and social protection-experts, program implementers, agricultural producers, healthcare providers, bureaus of statistics, policymakers, and funders. While the will of such diverse actors to address micronutrient malnutrition exists, there are few mechanisms or platforms to identify, prioritize, and implement the necessary activities, programs, and policies. Effectively convening and managing such platforms demands neutrality (no programmatic conflicts) and technical expertise to drive evidence-based consensus and move joint agendas forward.

The Micronutrient Forum, as a backbone organization, seeks to fill this critical gap to increase the effectiveness of the entire field and ultimately improve the lives of micronutrient vulnerable populations.



The Micronutrient Forum does not conduct research, policy, or implementation. Instead, the Forum works at the intersection of all three, filling knowledge gaps and improving collaboration.

Guiding Principles

Vision

The Micronutrient Forum envisions a world where all people have optimal micronutrient status for health and well-being.

Mission

To promote alignment and collective action on vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients across sectors by bridging nutrition science, policy, programs, and responsible business practices for health and well-being.

Strategy Statement

To foster alignment and collective action to ensure the adoption and implementation of micronutrient policies and programs are evidence-based, comprehensive, cost-efficient, effective, and safe.

Objectives

Cross-Cutting Themes	Disseminate Evidence	Facilitate Collaboration	Strengthen and Integrate Advocacy	Accelerate National Progress
	The Forum shall generate, synthesize, interpret, and disseminate evidence-based knowledge along the continuum from biological knowledge through program implementation.	The Forum shall foster multisectoral collaboration on micronutrient-specific and sensitive topics.	The Forum shall increase global awareness of priorities in micronutrient malnutrition through advocacy conducted with partners.	The Forum shall work with and support partners to better meet the needs of targeted national decision-makers and enable national-level progress on micronutrient priorities.
	Micronutrient Malnutrition			
	Women's Nutrition			
	Micronutrient Aspects of Emerging Topics			
	Prioritizing Data			



Strategy Background

During the three years of the Forum's genesis strategy (2019-2021), the organization was able to demonstrate its value as an independent, evidence-based convener in the field of nutrition, specifically micronutrients.

The Forum has grown in human and financial resources, reach, and impact thanks to the organization's agility and ability to respond to needs arising from emerging issues (ST4N) and needs arising from partners (Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Consortium (HMHB)). This flexibility, coupled with technical expertise, has proven critical to programmatic success from both a technical and political perspective. The Forum does not implement interventions; rather, the organization works at the intersection of research, policy, and implementation as a convener, knowledge broker, and advocate.

This new strategy builds and expands on the vision, mission, and priorities identified in the genesis strategy while expanding the product portfolio, setting clear objectives to increase the organization's impact.

Based on analysis of the nutrition landscape and feedback from partners, the Forum has identified four programmatic opportunities where alignment and collective action can meaningfully advance progress and where the Forum is uniquely suited to operate.

First, **good data** are critical for evidence-based advocacy, policy, program, and budget decisions. Progress on micronutrient malnutrition is hampered by persistent data gaps, including but not limited to a dearth of status and coverage data, fragmented tools, and disparate metrics.

Second, the need for **new forms of collaboration** and new mechanisms to align actors and establish consensus has never been greater, as the global nutrition community acknowledges the need for more integrated and cross-sectoral solutions. The multiple clusters and coalitions of solutions developed for the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 are good examples.

Third, the global micronutrient community must improve its **evidence-based advocacy**. There is a collective recognition that global micronutrient advocacy remains a weak point, resulting in inadequate and scattered micronutrient policies, programs, and investments. In mid-2021, the Forum convened over a dozen micronutrient technical partners who indicated their organizations are not conducting advocacy as well as others in the nutrition sector, and that advocacy conducted by the micronutrient community is not of comparable quality as that of other sectors, such as family planning, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and climate change.

Finally, action at the global level is not always sufficiently informed by **national priorities**, and global action does not adequately filter to the national level. National decision-makers need to be heard and in the driver's seat of developing adequate solutions to nutrition problems. Support of global partners to national nutrition actors must be responsive to their needs and given on their terms.

Strategic Objectives

The following strategic objectives summarize the Forum's new strategy. Coupled with themes (micronutrient malnutrition, women's nutrition, and micronutrient aspects of emerging topics) and outputs (conferences, consultations, hosting collaborative platforms, advocacy relevant tools, and technical assistance), they define the bounds of the Forum's work.

This strategy represents the continuation and extension of the organization's previous strategy – to serve as an impartial convener.

Objectives	
Synthesize and Disseminate Evidence	The Forum shall generate, synthesize, interpret, and disseminate evidence-based knowledge on micronutrients along the continuum from micronutrient biology through the implementation of programs.
Facilitate Collaboration	The Forum shall foster multisectoral collaboration on micronutrient-specific and -sensitive topics, including reaching more partners, better integrating with adjacent sectors, continuing to address the multisectoral element of micronutrient malnutrition, and facilitating the creation of research agendas. The Forum shall develop new workstreams under this strategic objective in response to contextual needs and the needs of partners - following rigorous prioritization criteria.
Strengthen and Integrate Advocacy	The Forum shall increase global awareness of priorities in micronutrient malnutrition through evidence-informed advocacy conducted with partners. This shall include advocacy within workstreams, as well as advocacy on micronutrients more broadly.
Accelerate National Progress	The Forum shall work with and support partners to foster linkages between global and regional/ national knowledge to better meet the needs of targeted national decision-makers and enable national-level progress on micronutrient priorities.

Strategic Focus on Evidence and Collaboration

The Forum will continue to be the lead organization for the synthesis and dissemination of evidence related to micronutrient malnutrition. It will do so by organizing and convening the Global Conferences as well as smaller conferences on specific topics, such as micronutrient data and women's nutrition. The Forum's virtual CONNECTED Conference, held in November 2020, offered access to critical knowledge on micronutrients to a substantially larger audience, including students and field professionals from low- and middle-income countries.

By leveraging its network of technical and policy experts, the Forum has brought together a newly formed Micronutrient Forum Advisory Council to ensure the Forum's work stays up-to-date with the current state of science and evidence, give the Forum access to a broad network of world-class experts in the micronutrient space, and identify topics that require further synthesis.



Programmatic Themes

The Forum will dedicate discrete attention to each of the following four programmatic themes. The programmatic themes describe on what the Forum works. These themes have been identified based on trends in the field, partner priorities, and the Forum's desire to impact areas where it is possible to catalyze action.

While these themes are practically and rhetorically important, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, the Forum may address an emerging topic that is relevant to a subpopulation other than women, such as the healthy diets of children.

Themes	
Micronutrient Malnutrition	There is a persistent unfinished agenda on micronutrient malnutrition that comes at a high human and economic cost. The Forum shall continue to collaborate with nutrient expert groups (e.g., FFI, IGN, iZiNCG) and engage in work that spans interventions and sub-populations to broadly promote technical micronutrient knowledge and evidence-based activity on micronutrient malnutrition.
Women's Nutrition	Women face unique biological and social factors that cause micronutrient vulnerability requiring invigorated and dedicated action. The Forum believes an intentional and integrated approach to women's nutrition will catalyze activity and expedite progress.
Micronutrient Aspects of Emerging Topics	Micronutrient malnutrition presents multisectoral and dynamic problems, and organizations working in the field must be willing to address emerging issues, such as micronutrient issues related to climate change and health. The Forum shall develop criteria for prioritizing such issues and believes it is critical to the organization's continued success to take a forward-looking approach to issues in micronutrient malnutrition.
More and Better Data	Good data are critical for evidence-based policy, program, and budget decisions. Micronutrient malnutrition is plagued by data gaps, including but not limited to a dearth of status data, fragmented tools, and disparate program metrics. The Forum shall identify and fill such gaps by developing consensus roadmaps, motivating investments, engaging national actors, and supporting the work of other data actors, amongst others, by hosting the Data Innovation for Nutrition Alliance (DInA).

Theory of Change

The theory of change visualizes how the strategic objectives will result in impact and accomplish the organizations vision. The Annex contains additional detail about the strategic objective, and the activities associated with each objective.

Activities	→	Outputs	→	Immediate Outcomes	→	Intermediate Outcome	→	Impact
Disseminate Evidence						More and better evidence-based investment, policies, and programs addressing micronutrient malnutrition.	A world where all people have optimal micronutrient status for health and well-being.	
Organize the Forum’s hallmark Global Conferences and topical symposia, and produce evidence-based publications on unresolved micronutrient issues.		Increased awareness and dissemination of scientific evidence and program activities on micronutrient-related topics.		Increased alignment on important and priority actions in micronutrient malnutrition.				
Facilitate Collaboration								
Host collaboration platforms and grow partnerships in support of the sector’s agenda on micronutrient-related topics.		Increased coordination, alignment, and collaboration on micronutrient-related issues.		More and better coordinated action and investments in micronutrient malnutrition.				
Strengthen and Integrate Advocacy								
Develop and implement an integrated advocacy strategy in support of collaboration platforms and the global micronutrient agenda.		Strengthened messages and one common voice advocating for funding, programs, and action on micronutrient malnutrition.		Increased ODA funding and domestic budget allocation for micronutrient interventions.				
Accelerate National Progress								
Support a growing network of national actors in advancing their micronutrient priorities through cross-country sharing of experiences and lessons.		Increased awareness and attention for and more solutions targeted at country needs and priorities.		More and better targeted national policies and programs.				

Key Outputs

The Forum's genesis strategy identified three programmatic outputs: advocacy, consultations, and convenings. Since that time, the Forum has begun hosting secretariats of collaboration platforms, and substantially strengthened its advocacy work, in addition to managing several consultations and holding its first-ever fully digital convening. Moving forward, the Forum will deliver on the following five outputs:



Conferences

The Forum has produced four successful in-person global conferences and, most recently, a digital CONNECTED Conference. While the landscape for convenings has changed, the demand and impact of knowledge dissemination remains strong.



Consultations

The Forum has a track record of bringing together experts and stakeholders to address important but unresolved issues in micronutrient malnutrition. This consultation competency is critical to address blockers as organizations increase activity in the space.



Hosting Collaborative Platforms

The Forum has developed three competencies that allow it to host and manage secretariats of collaborative platforms effectively: first, a culture and approach to engaging and maintaining collaborative relationships with stakeholders as a neutral, independent convener; second, technical expertise that allows the Forum to drive collective action and programmatic progress, and third, an operational capability (finance, governance, etc). The Forum currently hosts three consortia (HMHB, ST4N, and DInA), and anticipates hosting or co-hosting additional collaborative platforms and advocacy coalitions in the years ahead.



Advocacy Relevant Outputs

Based on the needs of existing programs and a widely acknowledged gap in the field, the Forum is expanding its advocacy workstream. The Forum conducts advocacy by synthesizing evidence into communications and technical advocacy tools, advocating for policies that increase investments and national and global action, building coalitions, and proactively reaching new and relevant sectors.



Technical Assistance

The Forum preserves and promotes technical micronutrient knowledge and serves as a technical backstop for organizations and work that require technical knowledge across nutrients. This work is conducted at the global level to support activities such as estimating the prevalence of disease due to micronutrient malnutrition or estimating the prevalence of micronutrient deficiency.





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