



© WHO / Isaac Ntshakubana

Research Agenda

Research agenda to address gaps in data collection, analysis and reporting on anthropometric indicators in children under 5 years old

Purpose

Accurate data on child malnutrition is a key input for governments and partners to develop and implement policies and programmes. In 2019, WHO and UNICEF released guidance on the criteria and standards for collecting, analysing and reporting on malnutrition estimates. The guidance was developed by the Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) Working Group on Anthropometric Data Quality using evidence-based information and practical experience. This has resulted in the strengthening of anthropometric measurement procedures in population-based surveys, although more can still be done. It became clear when developing the technical guidance that further research was needed to fill research gaps and provide a wider range of evidence-based recommendations. Through a collaborative, iterative consensus-development process, the Working Group drew on these gaps to develop a research agenda, which identifies nine research priorities.

Nine priority research topics

Briefs were developed to describe each of the nine research priorities listed below. Each brief includes a problem statement, research questions and research approaches.

The following briefs will be released in stages throughout 2023:

- Anthropometric standardization exercises in population-based surveys
- Technological innovations for anthropometric measurement instruments in population-based surveys
- Age collection methodology in population-based surveys to generate anthropometric Z-scores
- Replicate length/height measurement techniques in population-based surveys

- Hair obstructions in height/length measurement and clothing and heavy jewelry obstructions in weight measurement in population-based surveys
- Anthropometric remeasurement quality assurance procedures during data collection in population-based surveys
- Biological and statistical flagging of anthropometric Z-scores in population-based surveys
- Thresholds for anthropometric data quality indicators in population-based surveys
- Random and systematic error in anthropometric estimates in population-based surveys

The focus of the briefs is on anthropometric data relating to weight, length/height and age in children under 5 years old in population-based household surveys. In some instances, the briefs can be applicable to other anthropometric measurements, age groups or contexts.

Calling all interested parties

To move the agenda forward, we need researchers interested in taking up these research priorities to help us improve the quality of anthropometric data. And we need funders interested in investing in and supporting this work. The evidence generated will be used to update global guidance. The success of this effort will depend on working with donors to secure funding and cooperative partnerships among researchers directly involved in research implementation. The TEAM Working Group on Anthropometric Data Quality will serve as a coordinating body to avoid duplication and to ensure that the research meets the intended objectives.

Acknowledgements

This research agenda was prepared by the TEAM Working Group for Anthropometric Data Quality. The Working Group members are: Margit Bach (UNICEF), Oleg Bilukha (SMART/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Elaine Borghi (WHO), Joseph Grange (Environmental Incentives and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)), Robert Johnston (UNICEF), Monica Kothari (Surveys for Monitoring in Resilience in Food Security, ICF), Julia Krasevec (UNICEF), Richard Kumapley (WHO), Eva Leidman (SMART Technical Advisory Group), Erin Milner (USAID), Sorrel Namaste (The Demographic and Health Survey Program, ICF) [Chair], Teresa Shamah (National Institute of Public Health of Mexico), Elisabeth Sommerfelt (Independent Expert), Andrea Warren (USAID), and Bradley Woodruff (Independent Expert).

Special appreciation goes to the TEAM advisory group members, UNICEF Supply Division, and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey programme, that provided valuable inputs. Overall guidance and supervision were provided by Kuntal Saha (WHO) and Chika Hayashi (UNICEF), as co-Secretariat of the TEAM, under the joint coordination of the Monitoring Nutritional Status & Food Safety Events Unit, the Nutrition and Food Safety Department, World Health Organization, and the Nutrition Data Unit in the Data and Analytics Section, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, UNICEF.



©WHO / Blink Media - Brendan Hoffman

If interested in joining this effort

or if you have any questions or comments, please contact the TEAM Working Group on Anthropometric Data Quality at: nfsdata@who.int and sdg2.2@unicef.org.