

# ADAPTATIONS TO WASTING SERVICES AND NORMATIVE GUIDANCE REVIEW

## INFORMATION NOTE FOR MINISTRY OF HEALTH STAFF AND NATIONAL IMPLEMENTERS

### PREFACE

*In February 2020 UN agencies under the leadership of the WHO released the Global Action Plan Framework (GAP) on child wasting.<sup>1</sup> The GAP aims to stimulate action towards achieving the SDG wasting target and addresses key areas contributing to child wasting including improving child health and infant and young child feeding, preventing low birth weight, and improving wasting treatment services. The release of the GAP has been followed by country roadmap planning processes in selected countries under the leadership of UNICEF. In*

*addition to these country level processes, WHO has also engaged in the formal process of reviewing and updating guidelines on wasting prevention and treatment.*

*This information note is designed to respond to common questions regarding the guidelines review process, how this links to ongoing work on simplified approaches and key milestones.*

### What do the current WHO guidelines on wasting cover?

Current normative guidance on wasting address the treatment of severe wasting in outpatient and inpatient settings. Initial WHO recommendations were published in 2007<sup>2</sup> and were subsequently updated in 2013<sup>3</sup> with revised recommendations for the management of severe wasting. To date, there is no normative guidance on the management of moderate wasting and/or the prevention of wasting.

### What will the new WHO guidelines cover?

The revised guidelines will be informed by a series of scoping reviews which focus on the following areas.

- 1) Growth failure in infants under six months of age
- 2) Severe wasting and oedema in children aged six months and older
- 3) Moderate wasting in children aged six months and older
- 4) Prevention of wasting<sup>4</sup>

### How does this link to simplified approaches?

Much research has been conducted over the past 5-10 years on the management of wasting to improve service access and delivery. These research projects have included innovations and modifications that have commonly come to be known as *simplified approaches*. Research has generally focussed on how to make services for wasting treatment more accessible, simpler to implement, and more cost effective. In addition to research studies, modifications to treatment services have also taken place in operational settings due to emergency contexts, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence generated to date will be

assessed through scoping reviews to inform the upcoming normative guidelines. Where the guidelines review group determines there is sufficient evidence for certain modifications, recommendations will be made.

### How are the guidelines being developed?

A Guideline Development Group (GDG) has been established by the WHO who have been consulted on the initial step of the guidelines review process. During this consultation with the GDG, some key areas were identified concerning growth failure in children <6 months, as well as moderate and severe wasting. Following this consultation, specific PICO questions will be developed, and subsequently systematic reviews will be conducted to respond to these thematic areas, informing the normative guidelines.<sup>4</sup>

### When will the guidelines be available?

It is expected that the reviews will be completed in 2021 and the final guideline meeting be held at the end of 2021 to formulate the recommendations.<sup>4</sup>

### What if modifications to existing services are necessary before the upcoming guidelines are available?

It may be appropriate to modify treatment services due to exceptional circumstances. Current guidance states that simplifications are appropriate in the context of exceptional circumstances and that coordination with partners at national level is key.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, evidence generation on simplified approaches is actively encouraged to support both national and international policy.<sup>5</sup> As such, simplified approaches can be explored either in terms of emergency responses or pilot research where deemed necessary.

### **What will happen if any questions remain unanswered by the WHO review?**

Where key questions or research gaps remain, these will be highlighted in the recommendations with an accompanying research agenda.<sup>4</sup>

### **When and how should national guidelines be updated?**

Given the ongoing global normative review, it is recommended that national protocol reviews for wasting do not commence until these revised normative guidelines have been issued. As such, national review processes would be best placed after global normative guidance is finalised.

### **What support will be available for the national review process?**

Once the upcoming guidelines have been issued, UN agencies, notably WHO and UNICEF, will provide support to national governments wishing to update their national guidelines, policies, protocols, and training modules.

### **Where can I keep up to date on the latest information concerning simplified approaches and the WHO guideline review?**

For information on simplified approaches, please refer to [www.simplifiedapproaches.org](http://www.simplifiedapproaches.org). Updated on the WHO guidance review basis will be circulated as the process develops via sectoral magazines such as Field Exchange. [See here](#) for the most recent article.

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## **REFERENCES**

1. World Health Organization, UNICEF, Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Food Programme, UNHCR. *Global Action Plan on Child Wasting.*; 2020.
2. World Health Organization, World Food Programme, UNICEF. *Community Based Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition: A Joint Statement.*; 2007.
3. World Health Organization (WHO). *Guideline: Updates on the Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition in Infants and Children.*; 2013.
4. Summary of the development process for the guideline on the prevention and treatment of wasting. *F Exch.* Published online 2021:18.
5. World Health Organization. Joint UN Communique: Simplified approaches for the treatment of child wasting. 2019;(March):26-28. <https://www.who.int/nutrition/events/2019-consultation-simplified-treatment-childwasting-26to27march.pdf>