



Statement to the 142<sup>nd</sup> Session of the WHO Executive Board, 22-27 January 2018 on  
Agenda Item 4.6: Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition

Medicus Mundi International appreciates this opportunity to speak on agenda item 4.6. This statement is supported by PHM.

We congratulate WHO's ongoing efforts and progress on protecting and promoting the right to food, especially for mothers, infants and young children. However, we would like to express the following concerns on this topic.

Adults mediate children's access to food, yet the crisis of malnutrition facing adults is largely ignored. The existing food system profoundly impedes adults' ability to model "healthy nutritional choices", thereby undermining children's ability to adopt nutritional practices that protect their long-term health. Systemic problems with the global food system must be addressed to protect child and adult nutrition.

The current approach to addressing nutrition is technocratic: the emphasis on indicators provides a snapshot of nutrition but is of limited use in addressing structural drivers of malnutrition. Indicators should be read against a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between nutrition and structural factors that undermine women and children's nutrition, e.g. industrial agriculture, neoliberal trade policies, land grabs, and patriarchal gender relations.

The lack of nutrition indicators for breastfeeding and reproductive age women implies that women's nutrition is only important during pregnancy. WHO should continue prioritising interventions that secure women's nutrition throughout their lives.

Breastfeeding is increasingly framed as a low-cost investment in public health and economic growth. In addition to this economic argument breast-feeding is a human rights issue. Governments and employers must provide the economic, legal and political infrastructure that enable breastfeeding, regardless of the economic dividends of doing so.

There are no indicators in this plan that monitor men's contributions to infant and child nutrition. Without interventions that create a fairer division of household labour between men and women, breastfeeding and child nutrition policies risk reinforcing patriarchal gender relations.

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