

# The Lazio Declaration for Implementation Science in Nutrition

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Leading scientists and nutrition professionals meet in Gandolfo, Italy, in February 2015 to establish the Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition

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“Poor implementation and low quality of service delivery remain major bottlenecks to achieving scale and impacts”  
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Chronic malnutrition affects 165 million children and causes 3.1 million child deaths annually, or 45% of all child deaths.<sup>1</sup> Malnutrition is the single largest cause of death because it potentiates fatal infectious diseases. And if children survive, mal-

nourished children have higher odds of poor health and development outcomes.<sup>1</sup> We know how to prevent almost all these deaths and improve nutrition, health and child development with current interventions, but poor implementation and low quality of service delivery remain major bottlenecks to achieving scale and impacts.<sup>2</sup> In response to these challenges and the threats to food security caused by climate change, conflicts and economic crises, there is renewed interest and investment in nutrition, exemplified by the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, the Nutrition for Growth Summit, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Second International Conference in Nutrition, and the Power of Nutrition Fund. As commitments build, and countries engage more deeply with questions about how to

deliver nutrition programs at scale, the two critical challenges are: achieving high coverage, and delivering high impact from interventions already shown to have health and human capital benefits.<sup>3</sup>

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**“Fulfilling our commitment to health and human development requires an ambitious implementation science agenda”**

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In 1991, Alan Berg blamed the general failure in reducing malnutrition on the lack of focus on *how* nutrition interventions and programs are delivered.<sup>4</sup> More than 20 years later, we still lack sufficient knowledge about how to translate knowledge into effective programming, including how to overcome system barriers. Fulfilling our commitment to health and human development requires an ambitious implementation science agenda for informing the scaling-up of nutrition actions; generating evidence on the cost-effectiveness and equity of delivery strategies; and improving our understanding of the management processes and frontline capacities that increase the quality of nutrition service delivery.<sup>3</sup> This requires developing innovative research modalities, including more effective ways to link research to implementation. Importantly, we need significant increases in funding for implementation research because currently nutrition comprises less than 0.5% of total overseas development assistance, and estimates suggest that less than 3% of that funding is allocated to implementation research.<sup>5</sup>

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**“This Society values scientific and practitioner knowledge, bestows professionalism through affiliation and continuing education, and actively creates partnerships”**

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In February 2015, at Castel Gandolfo, Italy, the Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition was established ([www.implementnutrition.org](http://www.implementnutrition.org)). This Society values scientific and practitioner knowledge, bestows professionalism through affiliation and continuing education, and actively creates partnerships, acknowledging that nutrition is implemented through integrated multi-sectoral (and hence complex) programs, policies and strategies. There is a need for: **1)** scientists in academic centers

to fully engage in implementation research in the challenging context of real-world policies and programs; **2)** action agencies, program planners and funders to invest, support and partner in such research; and **3)** high-quality and influential peer-reviewed journals to publish this work.<sup>2</sup> Only through a collective effort involving financing, evidence generation, training, dissemination and policy engagement can we ensure that nutrition actions are appropriately designed and implemented at scale to reduce malnutrition in all its forms.

**Jean-Pierre Habicht**, member of the writing committee, **on behalf of the Founding Members** of the Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition.

**The Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition**

To learn more about the Society or about becoming a member, please visit [www.implementnutrition.org](http://www.implementnutrition.org).

**The criteria for membership are as follows:**

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Full members of the Society are individuals from civil society, academic, government, UN agencies, and/or business sectors with a record of accomplishment in nutrition implementation science, who have published in peer review journals, are active in implementation research, are actively implementing nutrition programs, or working at the interface of policy and program planning and/or operations.

**Full membership is open to individuals who are:**

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- 1.** Investigators with a doctoral degree or equivalent experience with proven track record of research pertinent to the areas of implementation research.
- and/or**
- 2.** Professionals with demonstrated experience, interest and/or proven track record in the implementation of nutrition programs and interventions, or the operationalization of nutrition policy.

**Contributors**

Jean-Pierre Habicht oversaw the writing of the letter. The Founding Members conceptualized, drafted, gave final approval and agreed to be accountable for the work. The writing committee (identified by an asterisk\* below) wrote the first drafts of the letter and incorporated improvements made by the other Founding Members. Eva Monterrosa\* managed the writing committee and is the corresponding author.

**The Founding Members**

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**References**

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“We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.”  
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We initiate and support nutrition research, contributing to evidence and supporting key discussions.



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