

# COVID -19 Response Learnings

Challenges, successes and suggestions for the future.

# COVID-19 response

In the response to the COVID-19 pandemic The Alliance (previously GTAM) provided technical guidance and support to countries, agencies and nutrition practitioners.

It was the first major crisis that the GNC Technical Alliance responded to since its formation.

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# Why do a learning piece

## **Purpose:**

To take stock of what actions the Alliance undertook during the COVID19 response – what were the challenges, successes and perceived value of these actions.

- To inform ways of working going forward
- To ensure a process of continual learning and improvement

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# Methodology

- Desk Review of activities and products developed during COVID-19 response
- 8 Key informant interviews (45min-1:15hr) with actors involved in the Alliance COVID-19 response
  - The Alliance Leadership Team (UNICEF, IMC, WV, GNC-CT, ENN)
  - Country Nutrition Cluster Coordinators
  - Members of Global Thematic Working Group and PAT Teams

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# GTAM'S RESPONSE

Taking stock of what we did...

- **Launched Website** April 2020 with **dedicated COVID-19 resource page**
- TechRRT (now TST) **hosted 20 webinars April-Nov 2020** attended by **4,615** people, 21% of attendees from National or local NGOs
- ENN hosted **5 podcasts** on how programmes are adapted considering COVID19 with **2,579 listens** - Aadaptations in Jigawa State, Nigeria; Family MUAC in Ethiopia; Growth Monitoring & Promotion in Burundi

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# GTAM'S RESPONSE

Taking stock of what we did...

## **The Alliance contributed to the Development of Briefs:**

- Management of child wasting in the context of COVID-19 briefs no.1-5
- Infant and Young child Feeding in the context of COVID 19 brief no1.
- Maternal Diets and Nutrition Services and Practices in the Context of COVID-19 brief
- NIS, Surveillance and Monitoring in the context of COVID-19 brief no. 1
- Guidance on financial and in-kind contributions from the food and beverage industry in emergency context (GNC Technical Alliance, UNICEF and GNC)

**The GNC survey findings on Adaption of COVID-19 nutrition coordination and programming guidelines (July 2020) showed the majority of clusters were aware of and used the guidance.**

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# GTAM'S RESPONSE

Taking stock of what we did...

Guidance	Aware of Guidance (n =30)	Used Guidance (n=30)
Infant & Young Child Feeding in the context of COVID-19	80%	73%
Template for Joint Statement on Infant and Young Child Feeding in the Context of COVID-19	63%	47%
Maternal Diets and Nutrition Services and Practices in the Context of COVID-19	47%	23%
Management of Child Wasting in the context of COVID-19	73%	63%
Nutrition Information Management, Surveillance and Monitoring in the context of COVID-19	77%	57%
Nutrition Sectoral and Cluster Coordination Guidance in COVID-19 contexts	70%	60%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>54%</b>



# GTAM'S RESPONSE

Taking stock of what we did...

## Technical Support

- Support to **>10 country clusters** to adapt the collective nutrition response plans or preparedness plans to COVID19
- Ongoing IYCF-E support to **Venezuela** and **Ethiopia** adapted to address new needs presented by COVID19
- Remote Technical support provided to support the COVID19 response in:
  - **Myanmar:** IYCF-E and IMAM
  - **DRC:** CMAM
  - **Afghanistan** (Action for Development): SBC and Family MUAC
  - **South Sudan and Somalia** (IMC): SBC

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# GTAM'S RESPONSE

Taking stock of what we did...

- **Coordinated and responded to questions:**
  - 120 questions received between March and June 2020 - IYCF (33), Management and prevention of wasting (56), NIS (8), other (23)
  - 20 GTAM GTWG Wasting posts on EN-Net - average 901 views per post (547-1264)
- **Consolidated Programmatic adaptations for COVID-19 context**
  - Prevention and Management of Wasting
  - Nutrition for Infants and Young Children – IYCF and Micronutrients
  - Nutrition information systems

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# CHALLENGES

What were some of the challenges that were encountered during the response?

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# CHALLENGES and solutions

Your feedback on the challenges and how we overcame them

## Issue:

**Process:** GTAM in start up phase – limited internal processes and system in place. *confusion around work processes.*



## Solution:

A lot of the structural and process issues encountered have been resolved through the new design of the Alliance or development of SoPs

Structures and mandates not of GTAM not clear. e.g., Confusion on purpose of PATS



ToR developed for PATs; LT member attended all meetings. Suggestion: preposition PAT structures for future responses

Instability and changes in Leadership team



UNICEF leadership stabilized under Saul/Megan

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# CHALLENGES and solutions

Your feedback on the challenges and how we overcame them

## Issue:

**Technical Guidance:** Handling and managing the amount of Q's  
“Bombarded with questions”



## Response:

GTWGs and PATs established to handle questions and adaptations

**Outstanding technical issues:** Lack of scientific evidence on COVID-19



Relied on WHO guidance, feedback information on gaps to show where information needs were.

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# CHALLENGES experienced

feedback on the challenges experienced

## Process:

- Slow to amend initial briefs and guidance
- Programmatic adaptations docs created parallel information source to briefs
- Lack of clarity on how the Alliance deals with controversial issues
- Institutional responsibility or partnerships with other agencies not always pre-established

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# CHALLENGES experienced

feedback on the challenges experienced

## Technical Guidance:

- Sometimes guidance was not always applicable or easy to adopt to specific country contexts – more theoretical than practical. Guidance often “dumped” back to users
- Feeling the feedback loop for responding to technical questions was unclear– hard to assess if answers to questions were getting back to the right people or meeting their needs
- Limited multisectoral engagement – challenges dealing with questions that did not fit neatly into nutrition sector, or how to align our response with technical guidance from other sectors

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# Gaps

*Is there something that you would have liked to see developed and available to you that wasn't?*

## **Technical Guidance and Outstanding Technical Issues:**

- Request for guidance on how to estimate the impact of COVID19 on the Nutrition Sector through needs assessment and analysis
- Requests for more alternatives for WFH or the presentation of information to help understand the limitations/benefits of different approaches and how to respond
- More guidance on how to practically apply the recommendation to use historical trends and data as alternative to WFH in NIS (now resolved)
- Easier to understand guidance on when/how to resume anthropometric measurements i.e. decision tree to navigate different scenarios

# Successes

How coordinated, accessible and timely the GTAM response was?


What worked well?

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# Our Successes

- Quick and **timely** response and adaptation to meet needs – website, questions, briefs, guidance, remote support and training
  - Strong oversight, communication, **coordination** – weekly community coordination calls (UNICEF), GTWGs, PAT documents
  - Quick development of recommendations and guidance:
    - Identifying where guidance was needed
    - Helped accelerate process of guidance development
    - Filled a gap in technical guidance until comprehensive guidance available
  - Webinars on COVID were quick to start (April), multilingual delivery increased their **accessibility**.
  - Including practitioners in the process of developing responses and guidance
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# OUR VALUE

Perceived value of our actions ...

- The COVID response demonstrated **The Alliance (GTAM) is fit for purpose** – providing timely, accessible and coordinated response to COVID19
- Created a **positive and constructive platform** for open collaboration across the sector “*there were no walls*”
- The Alliance allowed **rapid dissemination and up/downstream of communication** - did not have to create a new forum to do this during an emergency response
- The Alliance **provided a network of technical specialists**, platform for coordination in the sector that sped up response time
- **Developed needed technical guidance** to support countries to prepare for and respond to COVID



# Our Successes

## What people said:

*“This one saved my life... it was a Goldmine”* - GTAM COVID19 initial **resource guide**

*“The learning and sharing cafes were brilliant”*- **Webinars**

*“I didn’t experience contradictions in GTAM guidance, it showed good collaboration and consolidation with UN agencies”* - **Technical Guidance**

*‘GTAM and its partners were very useful in the response...I can list a number of guidelines; adaptation tools that were developed that would not have been possible without GTAM.’* - **Technical Guidance**

# LOOKING FORWARD

What's next, what work needs to be done, and how do we keep improving?

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# Looking forward

## Ideas and requests for the future

- Continue to make sure that webinars, guidance and support is driven by the needs from the field
- Request to provide guidance on a country level on how to know when to transition back to pre-COVID ways of operating, or operate long term in the 'new normal'
- Continue and improved engagement and communication with field countries (multi-lingual engagement) by The Alliance on who we are and what we offer
- Greater investment in Preparedness (training, relationship building, support early action activities etc)

# Thank you

*“...we have turned **the COVID response** into such an abstract thing... but it was such a deeply personal experience for everybody. Because while it was happening to the other but it was also happening to us... there has never been a crisis like that... where you are worrying about your grandparents just as much as you are worrying about people of Somalia....it showed that at a moment like this you could still think about the other and that was beautiful. It makes me really proud.”*

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