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Title: Public Finance for Nutrition: technical and political considerations of multi-sectoral financing

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Introduction

Economics has sometimes been defined as the study of how resources are, or should be, allocated (Black 2002). This is to a large extent the outcome of a political process.

We argue for a perspective that goes beyond the narrow analysis of the resources as a financing issue and takes a systemic perspective to understand the complementarities and interactions among different actors and factors (Warren 2002). This is necessary in the analysis of public finance for nutrition as it cuts across traditional sector boundaries (health, education, agriculture, WASH, social protection), and needs to build on these sectors' systems and lessons.

Methods

This work was initiated in 2013 with a review of the options available for tracking public expenditures for nutrition. Looking at the experiences and limitations with various public financial management systems, we concluded that a feasible way could be to identify, categorize and report on sectoral budget allocations for nutrition.

Results

The experience from 30 countries shows how the process itself is essential to stimulate dialogue and interactions among key sectors and disciplines (e.g. finance and program people). The analysis of the data estimates that countries are investing on average about 2.1% of General Government Expenditure in nutrition, and that there are significant resources in key sectors that can be further leveraged. However, this requires advocacy for improved programme design and resource mobilization to make relevant sectoral investments more nutrition driven.

Conclusions

The additional costs over current investments would be relatively small compared with the potential nutritional gains.

