The Rapid Social Response Program is supporting the development, production, and dissemination of tools and materials to guide policymakers and implementers of programs on nutrition around the world on how to address undernutrition from a multi-sector perspective to achieve more sustainable and rapid improvements in maternal and child undernutrition.

In the wake of high and volatile global food prices and the lingering global recession, policy makers and practitioners that are concerned with health and nutrition are looking for operational solutions to break the vicious circle of undernutrition.

Conventionally, nutrition programs and policies focus on specific or direct interventions delivered through the health sector—for example, distributing vitamin A supplements on Child Health Days; or using community health workers to educate families about better feeding practices for their children. But in response to the continuing high levels of malnutrition in the world, experts are now looking to broad-based, sustainable solutions that engage a range of sectors, including agriculture, education, and social protection in reducing the number of undernourished people in the world. There is substantial momentum for this approach. For example, the Framework for Action, part of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) global movement, launched in April 2010, calls for a multi-sector approach and the use of indicators of undernutrition as some of the key measures of progress in a broad range of sectors.

By reaching beyond the health sector alone, multi-sector action can strengthen nutrition outcomes in several ways. It can address some basic causes of undernutrition, such as lack of clean water, lack of food due to ineffective or nonexistent markets, or gender bias that prevents girls from attending school. Second, programs in sectors such as agriculture may be substantially larger than direct nutrition programs delivered through the health system, which could increase the scale of nutrition outcomes. Third, the increased coherence of policy that results when the government is attentive to the impact on nutrition of programs in other sectors can strengthen the outcomes for nutrition and lessen the unintended negative consequences.

RSR has supported a series of tools, analyses, and meetings to help countries and development partners develop practical ways to invest in nutrition through a variety of sectors. The multi-sector guidance briefs may contribute to several initiatives that make the link between agriculture, food security, and nutrition, including country-led efforts supported by the global movement for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), of which the World Bank is an architect and member. Workshops organized for development partners from a range of sectors are spreading an understanding of undernutrition and ways of integrating nutrition into their work.
As multi-sector approaches to nutrition continue gain momentum, national governments and international organizations may revise and adapt their policies on nutrition to include more multi-sector approaches, which may benefit efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for eradicating hunger and reducing child and maternal mortality.

**Accomplishments to Date**

- Developed three guidance briefs on multi-sector approaches to nutrition through agriculture, social protection, and health, expected to be finalized in May 2012

- Conducted analytical work that provided recommendations for multi-sector approaches to nutrition through poverty reduction, agriculture, social protection, and health