

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

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| <b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>      | A Nutrition Dialogue for Ghor  |
| <b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>       | Sunday, 17 November 2024 14:30 GMT +04:30  |
| <b>CONVENED BY</b>         | Murtaza Haidary, Senior MEAL Coordinator, World Vision Afghanistan; Najeebullah Lalzad, Zonal MEAL Coordinator, World Vision Afghanistan<br>Event announced on behalf of the Convenor by: Dr Mark D Calder. Technical support and advocacy |
| <b>EVENT LANGUAGE</b>      | Dari Persian   |
| <b>HOST LOCATION</b>       | Chagcharan, Afghanistan  |
| <b>GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE</b>    | Ghor Province  |
| <b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b> | <a href="https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55052/">https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55052/</a>  |



The outcomes from Nutrition Dialogues will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on women and children and young people. Each Dialogue contributes in four distinct ways:

- Published as publicly available PDFs on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal
- Available as public data on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal "Explore Feedback" page
- Available publicly within a .xls file alongside all Feedback Form data for advanced analysis
- Synthesised into reports that cover which nutrition challenges are faced, what actions are urgently needed and how should these be taken forward – particular, in advance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, March 2025.

# SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION

## TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

30

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

|    |       |   |       |    |       |
|----|-------|---|-------|----|-------|
| 0  | 0-11  | 0 | 12-18 | 15 | 19-29 |
| 14 | 30-49 | 1 | 50-74 | 0  | 75+   |

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

|    |        |    |      |   |                         |
|----|--------|----|------|---|-------------------------|
| 15 | Female | 15 | Male | 0 | Other/Prefer not to say |
|----|--------|----|------|---|-------------------------|

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

|   |   |    |   |
|---|---|----|---|
| 6 | Children, Youth Groups and Students                         | 1  | Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations) |
| 8 | Educators and Teachers                                      | 4  | Faith Leaders/Faith Communities   |
| 0 | Financial Institutions and Technical Partners               | 5  | Food Producers (including farmers)  |
| 3 | Healthcare Professionals                                    | 0  | Indigenous Peoples  |
| 0 | Information and Technology Providers                        | 2  | Large Business and Food Retailers   |
| 0 | Marketing and Advertising Experts                           | 0  | National/Federal Government Officials and Representatives                               |
| 0 | News and Media (e.g. Journalists)                           | 25 | Parents and Caregivers  |
| 0 | Science and Academia  | 0  | Small/Medium Enterprises  |
| 0 | Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives | 0  | United Nations  |
| 2 | Women's Groups  | 0  | Other (please state)  |

## OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

## ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

The participants in this study comprise a balanced group of 15 males and 15 females, bringing a diversity of perspectives on the critical issue of malnutrition. They represent various communities, including Dowlatyar, Firozkoh, Taiwarah, and Lal Sarjangal, which reflect a broad range of ages and experiences, and different denominations, as well as age groups, enriching the dialogue around nutrition.

# SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

## FRAMING

Ghor is a remote, rural and mountainous province, with significant food security challenges alongside other sources of poverty, exclusion and marginalisation. Food insecurity represents a multi-dimensional public health and economic crisis here, impacting not just individual health but also broader community stability and future development potential. The dialogue was structured into three main segments: opening, discussion groups, and consolidation. In the opening section, all the adult participants and facilitators introduced themselves to each other. Participants were encouraged to think about their own experiences in seeking enough nutritious food, while also paying attention to their wider community, and were reassured that their opinions were highly valued by the research team and the Nutrition Dialogues process as a whole.

## DISCUSSION

The discussions focused on pivotal topics such as malnutrition, the importance and nature of good nutrition, the challenges associated with achieving adequate nutrition, and innovative strategies for improving nutritional practices. Participants engaged in a rich dialogue that delved deeply into the socio-economic factors influencing nutrition, articulating various elements affecting their nutritional status. The discussion revolved around three questions: o How are you affected by food insecurity? o Are you able to get enough of the right kind of nutritious food your family needs? o What can be done to help people in your community secure enough food?

# SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

## CHALLENGES

Community members recognised that socioeconomic factors intersect in preventing or enabling good nutrition, as evident in the comments made by a man from Dowlatyar, who stated, "Poverty, unemployment, floods, conflict, and insecurity are among the challenges."

Of these, poverty is recognised as a formidable barrier to nutritional health. Participants expressed a pervasive sense of helplessness stemming from economic instability, rendering many families unable to purchase sufficient and nutritious food.

Furthermore, the discussions unveiled a significant information gap regarding dietary practices. For instance, one man emphasised that many families prioritise the purchase of low-quality processed foods over natural, nutrient-rich options due to financial constraints: "The low level of awareness and not using natural products like nuts, almonds, yogurt, ghee, and honey... leads to malnutrition." This illustrates the challenge of not only improving access to food but also educating individuals on making healthier choices.

Participants noted that inadequate services—such as reliable access to clean water, agricultural training, and health services—exacerbate these issues.

Participants discussed that while most know poor-quality snacks, cookies, and cheap processed foods are potentially harmful for children, they still prefer these foods over available natural options. They often sell their yoghurt, milk, and collected vegetables from lands, eggs, potatoes, and fresh fruits to purchase cold drinks, pasta, and processed juices.

A 22-year-old from the Poshta-e-Eidgah community, said, "People in our context usually do not think about the long-term outcomes and focus only on immediate satisfaction. This mindset is the reason for many challenges in our community, not just health and nutrition issues. For example, people marry off their underage daughters to get some money or to fulfil their wish of seeing their children's wedding party, without considering the long-term."

## URGENT ACTIONS

In the dialogue, participants offered a wealth of insights and suggestions for overcoming these barriers. A recurrent theme was the importance of educational initiatives to inform community members about proper nutrition. One man asserted, "People need to be informed about the impact of good nutrition and bad nutrition." Ideas include workshops led by health professionals and community leaders aimed at enhancing nutritional literacy. One man suggested supporting local schools to distribute knowledge.

Another focus was improved agricultural practices. Several participants advocated for supporting the cultivation of local fruits and vegetables as a sustainable means of improving nutrition. A participant noted, "In our villages, we have milk, yoghurt, oil, honey, and vegetables that we can use for nutrition," highlighting untapped local resources.

While a lack of transportation routes and shortage of facilities were identified as compounding the difficulty in accessing quality food and healthcare, participants flagged the need for community-focused solutions that target these systemic challenges.

Special emphasis was placed on the nutritional education of women, particularly pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Initiatives to provide knowledge on maternal nutrition were deemed crucial for the well-being of both mothers and children.

Participants were agreed that addressing malnutrition requires a multi-faceted approach that encompasses education, economic support, and community engagement.

## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Despite shared concerns, participants expressed differing views on how best to approach these issues. While all believed raising awareness is key, some participants focused on grassroots awareness campaigns, while others viewed formal educational programmes as the essential vehicle.

The dialogue revealed different opinions on prioritisation. Some participants sought urgent interventions such as immediate lifesaving food assistance, whereas others argued for systemic change through agriculture and education that could increase self-sufficiency.

## OVERALL SUMMARY

The participants in this study comprise a balanced group of 15 males and 15 females, bringing a diversity of perspectives on the critical issue of food insecurity. They represent various communities, overwhelmingly rural, but which reflect a broad range of ages and experiences. This age distribution spans different life stages, including teenagers, young adults, adults, middle-aged individuals, and seniors, enriching the dialogue around nutrition by illustrating the distinct challenges faced by each demographic group. The balanced gender representation is noteworthy, while the dialogue achieved denominational inclusion by engaging approximately 25% Shia and 75% Sunni participants. Each participant contributed unique insights drawn from their experiences, highlighting how factors such as economic conditions, community stability, and social awareness significantly influence nutritional health outcomes.

Moreover, the various age categories represented in the study underline the urgency of addressing food insecurity and malnutrition across different population segments. For instance, younger participants face distinct nutritional challenges compared to older adults, thus calling for tailored interventions. As participants voiced concerns about the long-term implications of malnutrition, such as its effects on child development, participants reflected on the urgent need for comprehensive strategies aimed at fostering nutritional awareness and improving access to quality food sources.

Overall, the diversity of age, gender, and geographic location among the participants indicates that any effective nutritional intervention must account for the varying experiences and specific needs of different groups and communities.

As participants articulated, several systemic factors contribute to malnutrition, including economic distress, lack of education on nutritional practices, and limited access to quality food sources. Participants recognised the long-term impact of malnutrition upon individual health and economic productivity.

The overwhelming majority pointed towards poverty as a significant driver of malnutrition. As highlighted by numerous quotes, families face a daily struggle to afford basic necessities, let alone nutritious foods.

There is a pressing need for education and community awareness regarding the importance of balanced diets. Multiple participants, including Ramadan, cited ignorance as a critical barrier to better nutrition. An anecdote shared by a 29-year-old participant in the nutrition dialogues, described how she used to sell her hens' eggs in exchange for nutritionally poor cookies before realising the high nutritional value of eggs. She said, "we have hens at home that give us eggs every day. Instead of cooking them for our children, we let our child take an egg to the nearest small shop and exchange it for some nutritionally poor cookies or snacks. As parents, we didn't care about this and didn't think about the consequences. We were just fine with her current satisfaction." Another woman shared, "Improving nutrition starts with raising awareness and using available resources wisely." This represents a call to action to ensure that communities can transform their challenges into pathways toward better health and nutrition for all.

Participants also noted that many areas lack adequate infrastructure, including health facilities and clean water sources, which are vital for maintaining health and nutrition.

As this report illustrates, the pathways to overcoming malnutrition are not only significant for individual health but are also essential for building healthier, more resilient communities. Effective strategies must leverage local knowledge, promote sustainable practices, and involve coordinated efforts across multiple sectors. The voices captured in this dialogue provide a foundation upon which actionable strategies can be developed, ensuring that nutritious food becomes accessible to all families, especially the most vulnerable.

In summary, the discussions highlighted a crucial consensus: addressing malnutrition requires a multi-faceted approach that encompasses education, economic support, and community engagement. Participants expressed a shared desire for action and collaboration, emphasising the role of local leaders, health professionals, and religious figures in spearheading nutritional initiatives.

# SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

## PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Our Dialogue reflected specific aspects of the Principles of Engagement in several ways. Firstly, we ensured transparency and inclusivity by briefing our facilitators before the event on the participant list and identifying potential areas of competing interests. This preparation allowed us to manage these interests effectively during the Dialogue. We began the Dialogue with a brief introduction of the participants and the event. We invited participants to ask any questions they had before starting the Dialogue and provided answers to those who inquired. This created an environment where all voices could be heard and respected, fostering open and honest communication. Additionally, we emphasised the importance of mutual respect and active listening throughout the Dialogue. This approach helped to create a collaborative atmosphere where participants felt valued and understood, leading to more productive and meaningful discussions.

## METHOD AND SETTING

The Dialogue was organised by the World Vision Afghanistan MEAL team, working closely with the operations team to ensure community buy-in. Participants were invited through the zonal operations team, which acted as a link between the office and the community. The event was conducted in languages familiar to the participants in the World Vision Ghor office. Having secured diverse participation, the team also pre-prepared for potential 'dividers' and competing interests.

## ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

To ensure a successful and inclusive dialogue, it is crucial to ensure a clear division of labour and enough time to implement. Time for translating and distributing all guidelines and tools in local languages would ensure that all involved have a clear and consistent understanding of the process. Flexibility and adaptability are key to managing unexpected challenges.

# FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These dialogues were organised and implemented by the World Vision Afghanistan MEAL team, and we acknowledge Najeebullah Lalzad in particular for his leadership in implementing the Faryab dialogue. We also extend our gratitude to colleagues from World Vision Afghanistan operations and security teams, to our conveners, curators, facilitators, and record keepers for their dedication and hard work in leading the sessions, and to participants for their active engagement