

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	A Nutrition Dialogue for Herat
<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Thursday, 14 November 2024 14:30 GMT +04:30
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Murtaza Haidary, Senior MEAL Coordinator, World Vision Afghanistan; Najibullah Lalzad, Zonal MEAL Coordinator, World Vision Afghanistan
<b>EVENT LANGUAGE</b>	Dari Persian
<b>HOST LOCATION</b>	Herat, Afghanistan
<b>GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE</b>	Herat Province
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55055/">https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55055/</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

1

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0	0-11	0	12-18	013	19-29
14	30-49	3	50-74	0	75+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

15	Female	15	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
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## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

0	Children, Youth Groups and Students	1	Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)
5	Educators and Teachers	3	Faith Leaders/Faith Communities
0	Financial Institutions and Technical Partners	7	Food Producers (including farmers)
2	Healthcare Professionals	0	Indigenous Peoples
0	Information and Technology Providers	0	Large Business and Food Retailers
0	Marketing and Advertising Experts	0	National/Federal Government Officials and Representatives
0	News and Media (e.g. Journalists)	26	Parents and Caregivers
2	Science and Academia	1	Small/Medium Enterprises
0	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
4	Women's Groups	06	Other (please state)

## OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

The six 'Other' are all community leaders.

## ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

The Dialogue sought to ensure the representation of various backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences, enriching the discussions with unique perspectives shaped by their individual circumstances in Herat province, for example by: o Ensuring linguistic diversity (60% Dari Persian, 40% Pashto) o Including IDPs, returnees and host community o Including Shia and Sunni Muslims o Including those with no education and those with further or higher education o Including rural and urban participants.

# SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

## FRAMING

The adults' and stakeholders' workshops were 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. The event was facilitated by conveners, curators, facilitators, and record keepers who were responsible for taking note of the discussion. Herat province is very diverse including both the well-connected ancient city and cultural hub of Herat and extremely remote and rural villages. Herat was also afflicted by a devastating earthquake in 2023 and catastrophic floods in 2024, compounding the impacts of successive years of drought. Participants were divided into four groups, segregating by gender as required by the context, to discuss and share their ideas on three main questions.

## DISCUSSION

Focusing on three main open-ended questions, conveners, curators, and facilitators ensured that every participant actively engaged and shared their thoughts and opinions, either individually or in group discussions. The main issues discussed by the adult and stakeholder participants included the impact of food insecurity on their lives, their access to nutritious food, and the reasons behind any difficulties in obtaining it. They also explored potential solutions and recommendations to address their needs and reduce the impact of food insecurity, which significantly affects their well-being. 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? Through group discussions, participants identified key factors and determinants contributing to food insecurity. They outlined recommendations to be considered in future planning, aiming to address these issues effectively. The discussions highlighted the importance of community involvement and the need for targeted interventions to improve access to nutritious food and overall food security.

# SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

## CHALLENGES

- o Poverty and Economic Limitations: Participants shared that financial constraints severely limit their ability to afford nutritious food. Many families are struggling to make ends meet, prioritising essential expenses like rent over purchasing fresh vegetables and other healthy foods. This highlights the difficult choices families must make, often at the expense of their nutritional needs.
- o Lack of Awareness: Many participants expressed the need for better education around nutrition. Without adequate knowledge, families remain trapped in a cycle of poor health, unable to make informed dietary choices. A male participant emphasised this point, stating, "Lack of knowledge keeps families in a cycle of poor health."
- o Psychological Issues: Mental health challenges were cited as significant barriers to proper feeding practices. Stress, depression, and other mental health issues can impair a caregiver's ability to provide adequate nutrition for their children. A participant noted, "When a mother is stressed or suffers from depression, her ability to care for her children properly diminishes, leading to neglect of nutrition."
- o Food Scarcity: Limited access to diverse and fresh foods was a pressing concern, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters. Seasonal changes and environmental factors can exacerbate food scarcity, leaving families with few options. A female participant explained, "During winter, we rely on bread and tea because roads are blocked," highlighting the seasonal vulnerabilities that restrict access to nutritious food.

## URGENT ACTIONS

- o Education and Awareness: Participants emphasised the importance of workshops to educate families about nutrition. Practical sessions were suggested, where mothers could learn how to prepare healthy meals on a budget. This approach aims to empower families with the knowledge and skills needed to make nutritious choices despite financial constraints. A male participant insisted, "We need practical sessions where mothers can learn how to prepare healthy meals on a budget." Another said, "We need workshops to educate mothers on what is essential for their children." This underscores the importance of educational initiatives intersecting with healthcare to empower families with the information they need to improve their health.
- o Community Cooperation: The value of community support was highlighted, with suggestions to encourage exchanges among neighbours. This could involve trading excess produce from gardens, fostering a sense of community and ensuring that surplus food is shared rather than wasted. Such cooperation can enhance food security and nutrition at the local level. One female participant suggested, "We should encourage exchanges among neighbours, where we can trade excess produce from our gardens."
- o Mobile Clinics: The idea of establishing mobile clinics received enthusiastic support due to their potential to address immediate health and nutritional needs. These clinics would bring healthcare professionals directly to villages, providing essential services and education. This approach is seen as a transformative solution that could significantly improve access to healthcare and nutrition for remote communities. "Having healthcare professionals come to our villages would change lives," said a male council head.
- o Some highlighted the need for mental health support as part of comprehensive nutritional programs.
- o Others pointed to the need for improved infrastructure and emergency planning to ensure food security year-round.

## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

- ☒ Dependency on Aid: Some participants debated the sustainability of relying on external assistance. A male voiced, "Dependence on aid can weaken our community; we need solutions that empower us." Conversely, another participant cautioned, "Without immediate aid, many families will suffer further."
- ☒ Roles in Nutrition Care: There was a disagreement over who holds primary responsibility for nutrition. Some males highlighted fathers' roles, stating, "Fathers must step up to support their families," while women insisted, "Mothers bear the brunt of caring and ensuring proper nutrition."

## OVERALL SUMMARY

The Herat Adult Dialogues brought together a diverse group of 30 participants, equally divided between males and females. This group represented various backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences, enriching the discussions with unique perspectives shaped by their individual circumstances in the Herat region. Participants came from different linguistic backgrounds, with approximately 60% speaking Persian and 40% speaking Pashto. This linguistic diversity facilitated nuanced discussions about nutrition and health issues, particularly as they relate to local traditions and practices. The group included individuals from both urban and rural areas, providing a comprehensive understanding of the varying challenges faced by children and youth in different settings. The participants also represented various residential types, such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees, and host community members. This broad representation allowed for discussions about how displacement and migration impact access to nutritious food and overall health. Additionally, the group included both Shia and Sunni Muslims, adding depth to the dialogue surrounding cultural practices and dietary habits tied to religious traditions. In terms of education, the group showcased significant diversity, ranging from illiterate individuals to college graduates. Among them were teachers, community leaders, businessmen, and students, reflecting a variety of socioeconomic statuses. This range of educational backgrounds shaped the conversations about nutrition, with some participants having greater awareness of health-related issues due to their educational experiences, while others highlighted the pressing need for nutritional education in their communities. Overall, the diversity within this group facilitated rich discussions about the multifaceted challenges of nutrition in Herat. Their combined voices illuminated the importance of addressing local health and nutrition challenges and highlighted the necessity of including diverse perspectives in efforts aimed at improving the well-being of children and youth in the region.

Across both male and female groups, there was a consensus on the fundamental role of nutrition in fostering overall health, physical development, and mental resilience. Participants connected good nutrition to the prevention of diseases and improvements in quality of life. As one male participant stated, "Good nutrition is the foundation of a healthy life; without it, everything else suffers."

Key themes emerged, particularly the connection between poverty and access to nutritious food. Participants voiced that economic hardships severely limit their ability to provide healthy options for their families, often leading to reliance on staple foods. Cultural beliefs and norms also played a significant role in shaping dietary choices, with traditional views sometimes hindering the adoption of healthier eating practices.

Health-related issues, including food hygiene and the impact of environmental factors like drought, further complicated the situation, especially in rural areas where food scarcity is prevalent. In response, participants proposed several community-driven initiatives, highlighting the necessity for educational programmes to raise awareness about nutrition, food distribution efforts to address immediate hunger needs, and improvements to infrastructure, such as access to clean water and healthcare, including mental healthcare.

The role of education in combating malnutrition was emphasised. A male teacher pointed out, "If we can educate our students about nutrition, they will grow into informed parents who make better choices." Another participant proposed, "Organisations should distribute educational materials in schools to raise awareness about healthy eating patterns."

While there was a strong consensus on the need for action, differing views surfaced regarding the responsibility for addressing malnutrition—some advocating for government intervention while others emphasised the importance of grassroots efforts.

There was keen attention to environmental challenges and solutions. Limited access to diverse and fresh foods was a pressing concern, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters. Seasonal changes and environmental factors can exacerbate food scarcity, leaving families with few options. A female participant explained, "During winter, we rely on bread and tea because roads are blocked," highlighting the seasonal vulnerabilities that restrict access to nutritious food.

# SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

## PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Our Dialogue applied the Principles of Engagement in several ways. Firstly, we ensured transparency and inclusivity by securing diverse participation, and then 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 Herat 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 Herat 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