

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

WORKSHOP TITLE	A Children's Nutrition Dialogue for Ghor
WORKSHOP DATE	Monday, 18 November 2024 14:30 GMT +04:30
CONVENED BY	Murtaza Haidary, Senior MEAL Coordinator, World Vision Afghanistan; Parwana Rahmani, Child Health Sector Lead, World Vision Afghanistan
EVENT LANGUAGE	Dari Persian
HOST CITY	Chagcharan, Afghanistan
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Ghor Province
WORKSHOP EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55064/



The outcomes from Children's workshops will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on children and young people. Each Workshop 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

25 12-15

5 16-18

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

15 Female

15 Male

0 Other/Prefer not to say

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPATION DIVERSITY

The Nutrition Dialogue brought together a diverse group of children from various villages and districts of Ghor Province. While they spoke Persian, they were diverse in terms of: o Denominational affiliation (20% Shia) o IDPs, returnees and hosts o Children living with and without disabilities This variety in yielded different viewpoints on dietary norms, traditional foods, and religious practices related to nutrition, as well as challenges faced.

SECTION TWO: FRAMING

The children's dialogues began with ice-breakers and a discussion of favourite foods, as well as food and nutrition in general terms. A good understanding of good nutrition emerged, emphasising the essential components necessary for a balanced diet. One girl highlighted that good nutrition is crucial for both children and parents, framing it as a family-wide responsibility. Another emphasised the need for a well-rounded diet that includes all food groups, while a third succinctly described nutrition as "providing food for the body." Participants elaborated on specific nutritional requirements essential for sustaining health and preventing malnutrition. One boy stressed the importance of protein sources like eggs and fish, while another advocated for local agricultural practices to enhance nutrition, highlighting the benefits of legumes like chickpeas. Participants identified various local foods as particularly beneficial, emphasising their nutritional value. A different girl praised breastfeeding for its protective benefits against early malnutrition, and another promoted the nutritional advantages of legumes, such as their ability to regulate blood sugar levels and strengthen bones. This discussion served to set up the rest of the dialogue very productively.

SECTION THREE: CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

- 1. Knowledge and Awareness Gaps** A predominant theme of the dialogues was the significant lack of knowledge regarding proper nutrition and its preparation.
- 2. Accessibility Issues** The dialogues revealed troubling concerns about access to nutritious food, particularly for marginalised groups. One girl observed, "Pregnant and breastfeeding women living in remote and poor areas have low income and don't know about healthy and nutritious foods." This highlights economic and geographical barrier that hinder access to adequate nutrition.
- 3. Cultural Barriers** Cultural beliefs around food and eating were flagged as obstacles to improved nutrition. One boy succinctly pointed out, "Some families think it's okay for girls to eat less, which is detrimental to their health." These highlights entrenched gender norms that allocate food inequities among family members, endangering the health of women and girls.
- 4. Healthcare Access and Economic Hardships** Difficulties with healthcare access and economic instability emerged as vital topics of concern. One girl lamented, "The lack of health facilities and centres in villages, poverty, and the shortage of food... are other reasons for malnutrition." Her statements underscore the interconnectedness of health and economic stability as challenges confronting the community.

URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- 1. Educational Initiatives:** Numerous participants suggested educational programs as critical strategies for combating nutritional deficiencies. One proposed, "If institutions organise awareness programs in schools... they can raise awareness and educate children." Another girl passionately suggested, "People should know the nutritional benefits of local dairy products." This reaffirms a commitment to local diets and traditional food practices.
- 2. Access to services:** One boy highlighted the need for health infrastructure, saying, "Establishing health centres in remote areas can improve access to healthcare."
- 3. Promoting Local Food Sources:** A strong sense of community ownership over local food resources was evident in many responses. One girl advocated for supporting community gardening: "Encouraging home gardening can enhance food security." Her suggestion points to practical solutions that not only improve nutrition but also encourage self-sufficiency. The discussions illustrated a collective effort to engage with and promote local food systems as pathways to better nutrition.
- 4. Community Support Programs:** Community support systems were highlighted as essential for improving overall nutrition.
- 5. Livelihoods:** There was universal recognition of the need for economic empowerment. One girl argued specifically for women's economic empowerment, stating, "[Since 2021] many women have lost jobs. Projects targeting women can uplift their spirits and contribute to the economy." This recognition emphasises the multifaceted impact of job security on family nutrition.
- 6. Cultural norms:** Addressing cultural norms and actively advocating for change was viewed by some children as essential. One child insisted, "We should challenge beliefs that restrict women and girls from eating properly." Participants expressed a clear understanding that nutritional needs must not be held back by incorrect beliefs about food and nutrition.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There was no significant divergence in opinion however participants approached the sources of malnutrition from different angles. Some attributed the problem to socio-economic factors, with one stating, "Malnutrition is caused by poverty and lack of awareness," while another focused on, "Environmental factors such as drought and natural disasters impacting food availability". Meanwhile, an agreement on the importance of education was expressed differently, such as by focusing on the one hand on information being provided through health clinics, and on the other on schools for education delivery.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The Children Dialogues conducted on November 18, 2024, in Ghor Province, brought together 30 participants aged 12 to 18 to discuss the critical issues surrounding nutrition in their communities. The Nutrition Dialogue brought together a diverse group of children from various villages and districts of Ghor Province, highlighting the unique nutritional challenges in both urban and rural settings. This diversity enriched the conversation, offering a range of opinions and experiences that fostered inclusivity and understanding.

Participants spoke Persian, facilitating effective communication and dialogue. Their cultural backgrounds contributed to a rich tapestry of perspectives, emphasising the importance of language in community-driven initiatives. Religious diversity also played a significant role, with approximately 80% of participants identifying as Sunni Muslims and 20% as Shia. This variety in religious beliefs brought forth different viewpoints on dietary norms, traditional foods, and religious practices related to nutrition.

The group included vulnerable populations, such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees, who face significant challenges like severe food insecurity and difficulties in reintegrating into their communities. Participants also included children with disabilities, who encounter additional barriers in accessing nutritional support. These diverse backgrounds and experiences made the discussions exceptionally valuable, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing health and well-being in the community.

Key findings from the dialogues included:

☒ **Identified Challenges:** Participants expressed significant gaps in knowledge about nutrition, accessibility issues—particularly for marginalised groups—and cultural barriers that disproportionately affect women and girls. Economic instability and inadequate healthcare access were pinpointed as interrelated challenges leading to malnutrition.

☒ **Proposed Solutions:** Innovative strategies such as educational initiatives, community gardening, and economic support programs were suggested to address these challenges. Participants emphasised the need for challenging harmful norms to combat gender exclusion that restricts equitable food access.

☒ **Diverse Perspectives:** While there were differing views on good nutrition and its sources, the collective conversations underscored the importance of education, community engagement, and the necessity to address socio-economic factors in the effort to improve nutrition among children and families.

In conclusion, the Children Dialogues affirmed the vital role of including children's voices in nutrition discussions, which will aid in developing effective, inclusive, and community-driven strategies to combat malnutrition and improve the health and well-being of all children in Ghor.

The insights gained from this diverse group can enhance the understanding of existing nutritional challenges and serve as a foundation for developing tailored programs to address the unique needs of all children in the community. By leveraging the knowledge gathered from these individual stories, efforts can be made to create inclusive and effective strategies that prioritise the health and well-being of every child, regardless of their background or circumstances.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

World Vision's staff applied the following principles to maximise inclusion and avoid risks of harm. • Ensure all children feel welcome and valued, regardless of their background or abilities. • Create a safe and comfortable environment where children feel secure to express themselves. • Encourage children to actively participate through interactive and hands-on activities. • Foster mutual respect and trust between facilitators and children, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. • Provide opportunities for children to express themselves creatively through various mediums like art, writing, and play. • Use simple, clear language and instructions to ensure children understand and can follow along. The workshop was highly participatory. In the beginning, the curators and facilitators introduced themselves and conducted ice-breaking activities with the children. • Encourage children to give feedback and reflect on their experiences, helping them feel involved in the process.

METHOD AND SETTING

The workshop was set up in World Vision Afghanistan's Ghor zonal office. Curators provided a simple briefing about the nutrition dialogues and obtained written informed consent. The facilitators emphasised the importance of the children's ideas and perspectives, encouraging them to share freely. To make the process easier, the facilitators simplified the questions, allowing the children to express their thoughts and ideas through drawings or writing.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

Longer planning allowing for more coordination with the community would help to ensure breadth of perspectives, and also create more time for children to reflect on their experiences and views of nutrition and food insecurity. Flexibility and adaptability are essential for managing unexpected challenges.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS