

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Fueling Futures Together: A Stakeholder Dialogue on Nutrition and Well-being in Mchinji, Malawi
<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Friday, 6 December 2024 10:00 GMT +02:00
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Rhodina M'bwana, Community Development Assistant, Malawi Event announced on behalf of the Convenor by: Yamikani Banda. Technical Support
<b>EVENT LANGUAGE</b>	Chichewa
<b>HOST LOCATION</b>	Mkonkha Trading Centre, Malawi
<b>GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE</b>	Community level stakeholder dialogue
<b>AFFILIATIONS</b>	World Vision International
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/56033/">https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/56033/</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

17

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0	0-11	0	12-18	9	19-29
6	30-49	0	50-74	0	75+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

8	Female	7	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
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## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

0	Children, Youth Groups and Students	0	Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)
0	Educators and Teachers	3	Faith Leaders/Faith Communities
0	Financial Institutions and Technical Partners	0	Food Producers (including farmers)
0	Healthcare Professionals	4	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)	3	Parents and Caregivers
0	Science and Academia	0	Small/Medium Enterprises
3	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
0	Women's Groups	4	Other (please state)

## OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

The other stakeholders were representatives of school governing committees such as school management committee, Parents and Teacher Associations

## ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

Participants came from different social backgrounds as well as religious backgrounds ensuring diversity and inclusion.

# SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

## FRAMING

The session started with introduction of each participant by name and department they are coming from as well as the position everyone holds. The conveners then introduced the topic for discussion. Participants were then divided into groups where they discussed issues regarding nutrition, challenges and their suggested solutions. From the discussions, presentations and clarifications were made ensuring clear understanding of key issues and points.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion revolved around ensuring ENOUGH and nutritious food for all children in TA Mavwere, Mchinji District, Malawi.

# SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

## CHALLENGES

The following were the nutrition challenges which participants highlighted during the discussion:

1. Climate Change: Effects of El Nino are evident in the district now as most of last year's growing season was marked with dry spells. This has caused a lot of households not to have enough food.
2. Poor post harvest management: The little that the households get is sold in pursuit of other necessities. However, most of the participants decried excessive drinking of some parents and guardians forcing them to sale the harvest to but beer. This is leaving a lot of households in dire poverty.
3. Policies and cultural norms that favor a certain group of people as opposed to others. For example, in some cultures, children are not allowed to eat eggs. This makes the children to be lacking some of the food hence malnutrition.

## URGENT ACTIONS

1. Due to the insufficient food availability in the communities, participants suggested reintroduction of school feeding program to cushion the effect of absenteeism and abscondment of children due to hunger.
2. Afforestation and reforestation to curb issues of climate change.
3. Community leaders promised to talk to their community members to allow children to enjoy any other food just as done by the guardians.

## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Due to differences in religion and beliefs, some people did not like the idea of one of the pastors who suggested that there is a need to ban alcohol. A lot of members suggested that it would be better if sensitizations are done ensuring that everyone drinks responsibly.

## OVERALL SUMMARY

The dialogue brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including community leaders, parents, guardians, religious leaders, and other community members, to discuss pressing nutrition challenges and potential solutions. The discussions were dynamic, insightful, and reflective of the deep-seated cultural, economic, and environmental factors impacting nutrition in the community.

One of the key points of contention was a suggestion by a pastor to ban alcohol in the community, which sparked significant debate. While some participants supported the idea, citing the negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption on household food security and general well-being, others opposed it due to differences in religious beliefs and personal freedoms. The majority agreed that rather than an outright ban, sensitization efforts should focus on promoting responsible drinking habits. This pragmatic approach aimed to balance individual rights with the need to address the broader social and economic impacts of alcohol abuse.

### Key Nutrition Challenges Highlighted

#### Climate Change

The participants identified climate change as a major contributor to food insecurity. The district has been severely affected by the El Niño phenomenon, which caused prolonged dry spells during the previous growing season. This has led to reduced crop yields, leaving many households without sufficient food reserves.

#### Poor Post-Harvest Management

Poor post-harvest practices were another significant issue. Participants noted that even the limited harvests were often sold to meet other immediate household needs. A concerning trend was highlighted where some parents and guardians prioritized alcohol over food, selling crops to purchase beer. This behavior has exacerbated poverty and food insecurity in many households.

#### Policies and Cultural Norms

Cultural norms and policies that limit access to nutritious food for certain groups, particularly children, were also discussed. For instance, some cultural practices prohibit children from eating nutrient-rich foods like eggs, leading to deficiencies and malnutrition. Participants expressed a strong desire to challenge and transform these norms to ensure equitable access to all types of food.

### Proposed Solutions

#### Reintroduction of School Feeding Programs

Participants emphasized the need to reintroduce school feeding programs to address food insecurity among children. These programs were seen as essential in reducing absenteeism and dropout rates caused by hunger, ensuring children stay in school and receive adequate nutrition.

#### Afforestation and Reforestation

To combat the effects of climate change, participants advocated for afforestation and reforestation initiatives. These efforts were seen as critical in restoring ecosystems, improving soil fertility, and mitigating the adverse impacts of erratic weather patterns.

#### Community-Led Advocacy for Equitable Nutrition

Community leaders committed to advocating for the removal of cultural restrictions on food consumption. They pledged to educate community members on the importance of providing children with diverse and nutritious foods, ensuring that they are not deprived of essential nutrients due to outdated cultural practices.

### Event Atmosphere and Reflections

The dialogue was characterized by a spirit of collaboration and openness, despite the diverse perspectives and occasional disagreements. Participants were deeply engaged, sharing personal experiences and practical insights. The discussions were lively, reflecting the community's genuine concern for improving nutrition and overall well-being.

The event also served as a platform for collective problem-solving, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among participants. The willingness of community leaders to take proactive steps in addressing cultural barriers and promoting sustainable practices was particularly encouraging.

Overall, the dialogue highlighted the interconnectedness of nutrition, cultural practices, and environmental sustainability. It underscored the need for a holistic approach that combines education, advocacy, and practical interventions to address the root causes of malnutrition. The outcomes of this dialogue will serve as a valuable contribution to the synthesis report for the Nutrition for Growth event in March 2025, reflecting the voices and priorities of the community.

# SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

## PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The dialogue adhered to key Principles of Engagement by fostering inclusivity, transparency, and respect for diverse perspectives. Participants represented a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including community leaders, parents, guardians, religious leaders, and other community members, ensuring that all voices were heard. To manage competing interests, facilitators were briefed in advance about the participant list and potential areas of contention, such as the proposed alcohol ban. This preparation allowed them to guide discussions constructively, ensuring that disagreements were addressed respectfully and productively. For instance, when debates arose around banning alcohol, facilitators steered the conversation toward consensus-building, leading to the agreement on promoting responsible drinking instead.

## METHOD AND SETTING

The dialogue was convened using a participatory approach, fostering open discussions among diverse stakeholders. Facilitators employed structured group discussions and plenary sessions to ensure all participants could voice their opinions. The methodology emphasized inclusivity, with targeted questions guiding the dialogue toward identifying challenges and proposing solutions. The setting was informal, held within a community hall to create a comfortable and familiar environment.

## ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

1. Engage Diverse Stakeholders: 2. Prepare Facilitators 3. Focus on Practical Solutions

# FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

World Vision Malawi

## RELEVANT LINKS

- **Nutrition Dialogues in Mchinji**  
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17Dax9UDGe/>