

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

WORKSHOP TITLE	"Nutrition" Children workshop
WORKSHOP DATE	Friday, 20 December 2024 10:30 GMT +07:00
CONVENED BY	Ulziimaa Nyamaa Event announced on behalf of the Convenor by: Sanchirmaa Surenkhorloo. Workshop facilitation Feedback published on behalf of Convenor by: Sanchirmaa Surenkhorloo. Workshop facilitation
EVENT LANGUAGE	Mongolian
HOST CITY	Altai, Mongolia
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Community level
AFFILIATIONS	World Vision
WORKSHOP EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/58105/



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

20

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

14 12-15

6 16-18

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

10 Female

10 Male

0 Other/Prefer not to say

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPATION DIVERSITY

The workshop participants represented RC and Non-RC children from the Gobi-Altai province. While most children were from urban areas, there were also participants from isolated rural parts of the province, reflecting a mix of backgrounds. Socio-economically, the children came from various family situations, including those from lower-income households and RC families. All participants were of Mongolian ethnicity.

SECTION TWO: FRAMING

The workshop was framed within the context of Gobi-Altai Province, located in the western part of Mongolia, approximately 1,000 kilometers from Ulaanbaatar. Gobi-Altai is situated primarily in the Gobi and desert regions, which presents unique challenges related to food security and nutrition. The harsh climate, characterized by extreme temperatures, limited rainfall, and short growing seasons, exacerbates the region's vulnerability to food shortages, especially during the winter months. These conditions limit local agriculture and food production, making the province highly dependent on imports for certain food types, which can drive up costs and reduce food availability. The local community is also impacted by seasonal changes, with winter bringing extended periods of cold and snow, which can disrupt transportation and food supply chains. Additionally, during the summer, dust storms and pollution can reduce air quality, affecting overall health and increasing the risk of respiratory issues, which may further complicate nutrition for children. We addressed the community's concerns about nutritional deficiencies, such as anemia and stunted growth, which are especially prevalent among school-aged children due to limited dietary diversity and reliance on traditional diets lacking essential nutrients. The discussion also covered the intersection of nutrition with poverty and socio-economic disparities, which exacerbate access to healthy and balanced meals, particularly for children in schools where nutritious options are often unavailable or insufficient.

SECTION THREE: CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

Poor quality food around school area: Many schools provide meals that lack nutritional balance, relying heavily on processed foods high in carbohydrates and fats while being deficient in essential vitamins and minerals. This poor quality food contributes to issues like anemia and stunted growth among children, affecting their overall health and academic performance.

Healthy and Nutritious food is expensive: Access to affordable, nutrient-rich foods is limited for many families. Fresh fruits, vegetables, and protein sources are often costly, forcing households to prioritize cheaper, less nutritious options. This economic barrier results in diets that do not meet the nutritional needs of growing children, exacerbating malnutrition and related health problems.

School cafeterias do not serve meal: Inadequate meal programs in schools mean that children (excluding primer school student) often go without a proper meal, leading to decreased concentration and energy levels during the school day. The absence of a nutritious midday meal hampers their ability to learn effectively and can contribute to long-term health issues due to inconsistent food intake.

Lack of awareness and information: There is a significant gap in nutrition education among both students and their families. Many are unaware of the importance of a balanced diet and how to prepare nutritious meals using available resources. This lack of knowledge perpetuates poor dietary habits and limits the community's ability to make informed decisions about food choices.

URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Participants of the Children's Workshop identified several urgent actions to address the pressing nutrition challenges in their community:

Increase Knowledge and Awareness: Participants emphasized the need for enhanced education on nutrition to help students and families avoid consuming substandard food. They proposed workshops, informational materials, and interactive activities to teach the importance of balanced diets and healthy eating habits.

Create a Slogan for Nutrition: Inspired by the effectiveness of slogans in campaigns like "Be a Friend", participants suggested developing a memorable slogan for promoting nutrition awareness. They proposed messages such as "Healthy Eating Starts with Us" to encourage positive dietary habits and community involvement.

Advocate with Trade and Service Organizations: To address the rising cost of nutritious foods, participants recommended engaging with trade and service organizations. They proposed submitting suggestions to stabilize food prices, promoting the availability of affordable, healthy options. Additionally, organizing public campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of affordable nutritious foods was seen as a key step.

Provide Nutritious Food for All Students: Participants highlighted the need for equitable access to nutritious meals, regardless of age or grade level. They proposed implementing school meal programs that serve balanced and healthy food to all students, ensuring no child is left behind in achieving better nutrition.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Responsibility for Addressing Nutrition Issues: While many participants believed schools should take the lead in providing nutritious meals, others felt that families bear the primary responsibility for ensuring children's dietary needs are met. This difference highlighted varying perspectives on where interventions should be focused.

Feasibility of Providing School Meals: Some participants were optimistic about the possibility of implementing school meal programs, viewing them as essential for improving child nutrition. Others expressed skepticism, citing limited school budgets and logistical challenges in rural areas as barriers to providing such meals.

Approach to Nutrition Education: While most agreed on the importance of increasing knowledge, opinions diverged on the methods. Some advocated for interactive workshops and peer-led initiatives, while others preferred integrating nutrition education into the school curriculum for a more structured approach.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The Children's Nutrition Workshop in Gobi-Altai province brought together 20 students aged 12-18 to discuss the critical nutrition and micronutrients challenges faced by children in the region. The workshop was held in a community deeply affected by the unique geographic and environmental challenges of Gobi-Altai, a province situated in the Gobi and desert regions of western Mongolia. With a harsh climate, limited rainfall, and reliance on imported food during winter months, the community faces significant barriers to ensuring children have access to a diverse and nutritious diet.

The workshop served as a platform for open discussion about the specific nutrition challenges faced by children in the province. The community's concerns were amplified by the high cost of nutritious foods and the limited availability of fresh produce, particularly during the harsh winter months.

Participants voiced frustration with the lack of school meal programs and the absence of healthy food options in mini-markets. Many pointed out that the absence of balanced meals in schools, coupled with limited access to nutritious food at home, leaves children vulnerable to mineral deficiency. This situation is exacerbated in rural areas of the province, where access to affordable, healthy food is even more limited. As the discussion unfolded, it became clear that there was a shared understanding among participants that nutrition is not only a personal issue but a community-wide challenge that requires collective action from local schools, families, government bodies, and organizations. The workshop's overall tone was one of collaboration, where participants actively engaged in problem-solving discussions to identify practical and actionable solutions to the nutrition challenges in their community. A key theme was the importance of increasing nutrition awareness and education. Many participants advocated for the integration of nutrition education into the school curriculum to help children and their families understand the importance of a balanced diet and how to make healthier food choices within their limited resources.

The idea of public awareness campaigns to promote healthy eating was also a central point of the conversation. Many participants expressed support for the development of a public slogan or campaign similar to anti-bullying initiatives, such as "Healthy Eating Starts with Us," aimed at raising awareness about the importance of good nutrition. This campaign would focus on educating the broader community about the impact of poor nutrition on children's health and well-being and encouraging healthier eating habits.

Some participants pointed out that while schools play an important role, families are ultimately responsible for ensuring that children receive proper nutrition. The workshop concluded with a renewed sense of commitment among all participants to advocate for improved nutrition in their schools and communities. The action points discussed—ranging from school meal programs to nutrition education campaigns—were seen as essential steps in addressing the nutrition needs of children in Gobi-Altai.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Children's Nutrition Workshop in Gobi-Altai province adhered to several key Principles of Engagement, ensuring an inclusive and collaborative environment for all participants. Inclusivity was prioritized by ensuring equal representation of both genders, with 10 girls and 10 boys actively participating in the workshop. This balanced participation helped to capture diverse viewpoints and address nutrition challenges that affect both girls and boys. Collaboration was another key principle, as the workshop facilitated open discussions where participants, guided by World Vision Mongolia (WVIM), worked together to identify solutions to the region's nutrition challenges. Through group activities, participants contributed their insights, leading to actionable recommendations such as launching awareness campaigns and establishing school meal programs.

METHOD AND SETTING

The Children's Nutrition Workshop was convened using a participatory methodology, encouraging active engagement through group discussions, brainstorming, and collaborative problem-solving. This approach allowed all participants to share their experiences, ideas, and propose solutions. The workshop was held in the hall of the Child and Youth Development Center, Gobi-Altai province, providing a comfortable and structured space for learning and discussion.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

Encourage active participation through interactive activities and group discussions, allowing children to voice their concerns and ideas. It's important to incorporate child safeguarding standards by ensuring a safe, respectful space for learning.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Gobi-Altai AP of World Vision for their support in organizing and facilitating the workshop. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the Child and Youth Development Center in Gobi-Altai province for providing the venue and creating a welcoming environment for the participants. Their collaboration was essential in ensuring the success of the event. And all the children for their active engagement and valuable contributions.