

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE TITLE	Nutritional Dialogue Phase 2- Stakeholder dialogue-Vaharai-Sri Lanka
DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 6 May 2026 10:00 GMT +05:30
CONVENED BY	Lavanya Suriyakumar (National Campaign Manager), Jennifer Fernando (Policy advocacy Specialist)
EVENT LANGUAGE	Tamil
HOST LOCATION	Vakarai, Sri Lanka
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Vaharai community level
AFFILIATIONS	World Vision Lanka- Vaharai Area Development Programme
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/60243/



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	13
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PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0	0-11	0	12-18	3	19-29
10	30-49	0	50-74	0	75+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

12	Female	1	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
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NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

0	Children, Youth Groups and Students	2	Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)
1	Educators and Teachers	0	Faith Leaders/Faith Communities
0	Financial Institutions and Technical Partners	2	Food Producers (including farmers)
0	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)	3	Parents and Caregivers
0	Science and Academia	0	Small/Medium Enterprises
0	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
5	Women's Groups	1	Other (please state)

OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

NA

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

The participants primarily came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with agriculture serving as the main source of livelihood for many households. The group included farmers, daily wage workers, preschool teachers, members of mother support groups, as well as parents and caregivers. All participants were Tamil-speaking and actively engaged in community volunteer initiatives. They also maintained close working relationships with World Vision Lanka through various community development a

SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

FRAMING

The session was introduced as an open dialogue rather than a formal meeting, encouraging participants to share freely. To build rapport, participants introduced themselves and shared simple personal details (e.g., what they ate in the morning). A brain storming was also done around the ENOUGH campaign, and last year's Nutritional Dialogues.

DISCUSSION

The discussion was conducted in an informal and participatory manner, using open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their experiences and perspectives freely. The conversation focused on key topics related to child nutrition, maternal nutrition, adolescent nutrition, agriculture, food markets, and school meal programmes. Participants reflected on questions such as: What are the main nutrition-related concerns in our community? How can we ensure good nutrition for everyone? What actions are needed to improve nutrition outcomes? and Who should be involved in making these changes happen? Participants also shared their daily routines and responsibilities related to food production, meal preparation, caregiving, and nutrition practices within their households. These discussions provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding nutrition in their communities. The exchange fostered a deeper understanding of the various roles played by parents, caregivers, community members, and other stakeholders in ensuring the nutritional well-being of children and families. It also generated practical recommendations and highlighted the importance of collective action to improve nutrition outcomes at household and community levels.

SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

1. While food is available, many parents lack knowledge of preparing nutritious meals.
2. Household income is often used to repay micro loans instead of investing in nutritious food.
3. Families are trapped in cycles of debt, limiting their ability to provide healthy meals.
4. Alcohol addiction among fathers affects household well-being and nutrition.
5. Teenage pregnancy, migration, and family separation leave children in vulnerable situations, often with grandparents.
6. Children left with grandparents are sometimes neglected.
7. Limited parental time (due to work) reduces supervision and contributes to risks such as teenage pregnancy.
8. Teenage pregnancy can lead to early marriage instability and continued cycles of vulnerability.
9. Buying shop food is often seen as a status symbol, even among those who can afford healthier options.
10. Lack of time leads parents to rely on shop-bought food, giving children unhealthy choices.
11. Parents either lack knowledge or fail to educate children on nutritious food.
12. Children eat well in nursery settings but resist similar foods at home due to lack of exposure.
13. Families prioritize snacks (e.g., biscuits) over more nutritious options like chickpeas.
14. Locally grown produce is sold rather than consumed, with income spent on non-essential items.
15. Limited awareness and preparedness among new parents.
16. Misconceptions and myths exist about certain foods (e.g., eggs, grains) causing health issues.
17. Fathers are not actively engaged in monitoring children's growth and health.
18. Financial priorities such as dowry savings affect nutrition-related spending.
19. Lack of healthy food options in school canteens.
20. Feeding practices focus on reducing hunger rather than ensuring nutrition.
21. Awareness programs exist, but behavior change remains limited.
22. Flood impacts (e.g., Ditwah) disrupt harvests and affect food access.
23. School gardens are not actively maintained or used for learning.

URGENT ACTIONS

1. Use saving groups to address microloan challenges and support financial stability.
2. Create small-scale livelihood opportunities for widows.
3. Promote caregiving awareness—parenting should include emotional love and care, not just financial support.
4. Introduce simple, nutritious, and appealing recipes for families.
5. Encourage fathers to take active roles in child care and nutrition.
6. Use experienced community members to deliver awareness for better acceptance.
7. Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure parental responsibility.
8. Extend school feeding programs beyond Grade 6, especially for vulnerable children.
9. Provide training on climate-smart agriculture.
10. Discourage migration of mothers in single-parent or girl-child households.
11. Improve government responsiveness to urgent child protection cases.
12. Address illegal alcohol production and related enforcement gaps.
13. Ensure fair pricing and storage support for farmers' produce.
14. Improve market access and fair pricing for fishers and farmers.
15. Strengthen knowledge on safe and effective use of pesticides and fertilizers.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

NA

OVERALL SUMMARY

The discussion highlighted that child and family nutrition is influenced not only by food availability but also by economic challenges, social factors, parenting practices, and community behaviors. Participants noted that many families struggle with debt, low incomes, migration, alcohol-related issues, and limited nutrition knowledge, all of which affect their ability to provide nutritious meals for children. Misconceptions about food, unhealthy feeding practices, and a growing preference for shop-bought foods further contribute to poor dietary habits.

Participants also emphasized the impact of family dynamics and caregiving on nutrition outcomes. Limited parental time, teenage pregnancies, family separation, and the lack of active involvement of fathers in child care were identified as significant concerns. While awareness programmes on nutrition are available, participants observed that translating knowledge into sustained behavior change remains a challenge. Concerns were also raised regarding unhealthy school food environments and the limited use of school gardens as educational and nutrition resources.

To address these challenges, participants recommended a combination of livelihood support, nutrition education, stronger parenting and caregiving practices, and improved food systems. Key suggestions included promoting savings groups, supporting vulnerable families and widows, engaging fathers more actively in child nutrition, extending school feeding programmes, improving market access for farmers, strengthening climate-smart agriculture, and addressing child protection concerns. Participants stressed that improving nutrition requires coordinated action from families, schools, communities, and government institutions to create a healthier and more supportive environment for children.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Various community stakeholders from the area participated in the discussion, bringing a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and lived experiences that enriched the conversation. The session was guided by open-ended questions focusing on the nutrition of children, adolescents, women, and men, allowing participants to share their perspectives freely and openly. All participants actively contributed by sharing their experiences, opinions, and observations related to nutrition and community well-being. The discussion was conducted in a respectful and inclusive manner, ensuring that everyone had an equal opportunity to voice their views and recommendations. The diversity of participants provided valuable insights into the nutritional challenges and opportunities within the community. Their varied perspectives helped identify practical and locally relevant solutions while fostering a collaborative environment that encouraged collective thinking and shared responsibility for improving nutrition

METHOD AND SETTING

The setting was informal and welcoming, creating a comfortable atmosphere that encouraged active participation. The seating arrangement was organized in a circle, allowing all participants to see and engage with one another easily, which fostered open dialogue and interaction. Special consideration was given to mothers attending with infants and young children to ensure their comfort and participation throughout the session. Nutritious refreshments were served during the discussion.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

It is important to consider the gender distribution of participants during the discussion and ensure that no single gender disproportionately influences the conversation. In groups where one gender is represented in larger numbers, there is a possibility that their perspectives may dominate the discussion. Facilitators should therefore actively encourage balanced participation, creating space for all voices to be heard.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the World Vision Lanka Area Development Programme, its staff members, and community volunteers for successfully organizing this workshop. We also extend our appreciation to Technical Advisor – Integrated Nutrition and Technical Specialist – Disaster Risk Reduction for their valuable support and guidance

ATTACHMENTS

- During the discussion
- One of the participants sharing her view points
- Discussion