

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE TITLE	Nutritional Dialogue Phase 2- Stakeholder dialogue-Rideegama-Sri Lanka
DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 6 May 2026 10:30 GMT +05:30
CONVENED BY	Johanne Rebeira (Campaign coordinator)
EVENT LANGUAGE	Sinhala
HOST LOCATION	Ridigama, Sri Lanka
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Community level
AFFILIATIONS	Rideegama Area Development Programme- World Vision Lanka
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/60249/



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	0	19-29
9	30-49	4	50-74	0	75+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

11	Female	2	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)
2	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)	2	Parents and Caregivers
0	Science and Academia	0	Small/Medium Enterprises
0	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
7	Women's Groups	1	Other (please state)

OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

NA

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

A total of 13 participants represented the Rideegama community in the discussion. They included caregivers, some of whom were affected by the 'Ditwa' cyclone, as well as representatives from the core group of the Citizen Voice in Action (CVA) Programme of World Vision Lanka.

SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

FRAMING

Rideegama is a rural community located in the Kurunegala District of the North Western Province of Sri Lanka. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sinhala-speaking populations and is characterized by its agricultural-based livelihoods, with many households depending on farming and related daily wage activities for income. The community reflects typical rural socio-economic conditions, including moderate to low household incomes, limited access to resources, and reliance on local markets for food and essential services. Rideegama has a strong cultural and social structure, with close-knit communities and active participation in local groups such as children's societies and community-based organizations. However, the area faces several challenges, including economic pressure, limited access to nutritious food, and vulnerabilities caused by climate-related events such as the 'Ditwa' cyclone. Issues such as migration for employment, changes in food consumption patterns, and limited health and nutrition awareness further influence the well-being of the community, particularly children.

DISCUSSION

The discussion commenced with a welcome address from the Area Programme staff and facilitator briefly outlined the purpose of the session and refreshed participants' understanding of nutrition and the current nutritional situation using recent data. This was followed by a round of self-introductions, after which the session proceeded as an interactive and friendly discussion guided by open-ended questions. Participants shared their experiences and perspectives on the current nutrition situation in the area, key challenges, and practical suggestions, with a focus on school meals, school canteen services, and preschool meal provision. They also discussed the impact of the 'Ditwa' cyclone, highlighting how it has affected food security and nutrition within their community. Additionally, participants proposed recommendations to address system gaps and improve the quality and accessibility of nutrition-related services.

SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

Due to economic hardship, many children and families skip meals, affecting their overall nutrition. Most people do not have access to a balanced diet. Livelihoods, especially agriculture, are frequently affected by disasters, and crops are often destroyed by animals. Many mothers and caregivers are increasingly addicted to mobile phones, which affects childcare and feeding practices. Busy lifestyles and academic pressure reduce the time available for preparing and consuming balanced and nutritious meals. Some government employees struggle to allocate sufficient funds for nutritious food due to poor financial management, resulting in malnutrition and underweight children. The 'Ditwa' cyclone severely affected livelihoods, and many families are still struggling to recover. There is a need for a structured psychosocial support system to assist communities during and after disasters. In safety centers, food distribution often lacks nutritional diversity; most people receive the same items (e.g., instant noodles, potatoes, rice, and soya meat), with limited attention to the specific nutritional needs of infants and children. Many people stay in safety centers for more than a month, leading to a decline in attention to proper nutrition over time. A high availability of fast food in school canteens contributes to unhealthy eating habits. Many children do not bring lunch to school, as they prefer fast food options. School canteens are often not clean, and suppliers do not consistently follow hygiene and food safety practices. Canteen owners tend to prioritize profit over food quality and safety, sometimes storing food improperly due to lack of knowledge. Although primary school children receive school meals, they often reject them due to poor cleanliness and quality. The allocated budget per student for school meals is insufficient given current food prices. Following the 'Ditwa' cyclone, rates of underweight conditions and illness among preschool children have increased

URGENT ACTIONS

1. Strengthen the Village Child Development Management Committees (VCDMCs) to support anticipatory actions and disaster preparedness.
2. Promote home gardening to improve household food security and nutrition.
3. In Rideegama, an active Mother Support Group has been established; this group can train other mother groups on preparing nutritious and attractive recipes.
4. Conduct awareness sessions to promote positive changes in attitudes and behaviors related to nutrition and health.
5. Place greater focus on rebuilding livelihoods rather than only providing immediate relief support after disasters.
6. Provide vocational training opportunities for children and adolescents to enhance their skills and future livelihoods.
7. Expand school meal programs to cover all children.
8. Establish a proper system to provide psychosocial support services to the community
9. Promote savings groups to improve financial discipline and strengthen household financial management

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Compared to the situation five years ago, the condition has improved and the issue has reduced. Although there are now more resources available in the Rideegama area, some mothers still neglect to prepare nutritious meals for their children

OVERALL SUMMARY

The Nutrition Dialogue in Rideegama highlights significant challenges affecting community nutrition and well-being, driven by economic hardship, rising food prices, and disaster impacts such as the 'Ditwa' cyclone. Many families struggle to access balanced diets, with children particularly affected by food insecurity, irregular school attendance, and unhealthy eating habits influenced by busy lifestyles and media trends. School environments further contribute to the problem through the widespread availability of fast food, inadequate hygiene standards, and limited access to nutritious meals. At the same time, gaps in practical nutrition education, weak regulatory systems in school canteens, and limited ground-level data collection during emergencies reduce the effectiveness of responses. Caregiver neglect, and lack of psychosocial support also negatively impact children's health and development. To address these issues, strengthening community and institutional systems is essential. Key recommendations include enhancing the role of VCDMCs in disaster preparedness, promoting home gardening and savings groups, improving school meal programs and canteen regulation, and expanding awareness initiatives to drive behavior change. Leveraging local structures such as Mother Support Groups, rebuilding livelihoods, and establishing comprehensive psychosocial support systems will be critical to improving resilience and ensuring sustainable nutrition outcomes in the community.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

All participants were provided with an opportunity to share their perspectives on challenges, issues, and potential solutions within an open and inclusive discussion. The session also utilized a problem tree as a participatory tool to facilitate deeper analysis and understanding

METHOD AND SETTING

Seating was arranged in a half-circle to encourage interaction, and the National Campaign Coordinator facilitated the discussion by guiding participants through questions on challenges, issues, and suggested solutions. The session was conducted in a semi-informal manner, with participation from individuals representing diverse ethnic backgrounds.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

NA

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.