

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

WORKSHOP TITLE	Nutritional Dialogue Phase 2- Children's workshop-Rideegama-Sri Lanka
WORKSHOP DATE	Wednesday, 6 May 2026 15:30 GMT +05:30
CONVENED BY	Johanne Rebeira (Campaign coordinator), Dinushi Tennekoon (MEAL coordinator)
EVENT LANGUAGE	Sinhala
HOST CITY	Ridigama, Sri Lanka
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Community level
AFFILIATIONS	Community level
WORKSHOP EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/60252/



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	16
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PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

5	12-15	11	16-18
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PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

8	Female	8	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
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ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPATION DIVERSITY

Representatives from children's societies and Impact Plus clubs participated in the discussion, while the Rideegama community is predominantly Sinhala and rural

SECTION TWO: FRAMING

The participants mainly consisted of school-aged children from farming and low-income households, reflecting the local socio-economic conditions, cultural practices, and food habits of the area. The session began with an icebreaker activity to build rapport with the children, followed by asking them to define nutrition in order to assess their existing knowledge. Most of the children were able to clearly explain what nutrition is and why it is important to consume nutritious foods. The discussion then explored the current nutritional situation in their community, considering local dietary practices, food availability, and socio-cultural influences. Particular attention was given to how the 'Ditwa' cyclone (disaster) affected nutrition and food security, including disruptions to household food access and livelihoods. The conversation also covered the availability of nutritious food in safety centers during emergencies, the quality of school meals, and the availability and standards of food provided by school canteens. The session concluded with children sharing their suggestions and their vision for improving the future nutritional situation in their community. To ensure engagement and meaningful participation, child-friendly tools such as story-based photographs and poster-making activities were used throughout the session.

SECTION THREE: CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

1. The community has limited awareness of proper nutrition, partly due to economic competition and challenges among households.
2. Most families are experiencing significant economic pressure, which affects their ability to access nutritious food.
3. Busy lifestyles and changing social trends negatively influence healthy eating practices.
4. Many children tend to follow trendy eating and drinking habits, often choosing unhealthy options.
5. Media influence strongly promotes fast foods and processed foods, encouraging unhealthy dietary behaviors.
6. There is inadequate government regulation and monitoring of food labeling and advertising.
7. Greater attention needs to be given to mental health alongside nutrition.
8. Due to migration to urban areas or abroad for employment, many children are left without proper parental care, which impacts their nutrition and well-being.
9. Some children do not attend school regularly because they engage in odd jobs due to food insecurity. Additionally, some secondary school students do not bring lunch to school.
10. Global and economic crises have led to an increase in food prices, reducing access to nutritious food.
11. Practical and technical skills, such as home gardening, are not effectively taught or utilized in schools.
12. Healthy food options are limited in school canteens, and monitoring by school authorities is often weak.
13. Academic pressure and mental stress discourage children from engaging in activities like home gardening.
14. A high availability of fast food in school canteens contributes to unhealthy eating habits.
15. Practical lessons, such as food preparation, serving, and hygiene practices, are not adequately included in the school curriculum.
16. Many school canteens are not clean or child-friendly.
17. There is insufficient government awareness and education provided to children regarding disaster preparedness and its impact on nutrition.

URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

1. Awareness sessions are needed to promote positive changes in attitudes and behaviors related to nutrition and health.
2. School home gardening programs should be introduced to enhance children's practical skills and promote access to healthy food.
3. Schools need to actively promote nutritious foods and good health practices among students.
4. Regulations should be strengthened to control the marketing and advertising of junk food.
5. The government should conduct community consultations when making decisions to ensure inclusiveness and relevance.
6. School canteens should promote healthy food, maintain a child-friendly environment, and be properly monitored and regulated.
7. Community kitchen concepts have proven to work well in schools and should be further promoted.
8. A well-structured system should be established to provide proper psychosocial support within the community.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

NA

OVERALL SUMMARY

The discussion highlighted several challenges affecting nutrition and well-being in the community. Economic pressures and rising food prices limit access to nutritious food, while busy lifestyles and strong media influence promote unhealthy eating habits, particularly among children. There is limited awareness of proper nutrition, weak regulation of food advertising, and poor monitoring of school canteens, leading to the widespread availability of unhealthy food. Social issues such as parental migration, lack of caregiver support, irregular school attendance, and food insecurity further affect children's nutrition. In addition, schools provide limited practical learning opportunities related to nutrition, hygiene, and home gardening, while psychosocial support and disaster awareness remain inadequate.

To address these issues, participants emphasized the need for increased awareness programs to promote positive behavioral change. They recommended that schools introduce home gardening initiatives, promote nutritious food, and integrate practical life skills such as food preparation and hygiene into the curriculum. Strengthening regulations on junk food advertising and improving monitoring of school canteens were also identified as priorities to ensure safer and healthier food environments.

Participants further suggested promoting community-based approaches such as community kitchens and creating child-friendly environments in schools. They highlighted the importance of involving communities in government decision-making processes to ensure that interventions are relevant and effective. Additionally, they stressed the need to establish a structured psychosocial support system and improve disaster awareness, particularly for children and families affected by economic hardship and emergencies.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

All children actively participated in the discussion and enjoyed the activities they were engaged in, while openly sharing their honest experiences and ideas.

METHOD AND SETTING

All children were sitting on half circle and they have actively engaged with activities and prepared posters with their expressions and ideas. Session was conducted for around two hours

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

An enabling, child-friendly environment was created where children felt safe to share their ideas and express themselves at their own level

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Rideegama Area Programme, its staff members, and community volunteers for successfully organizing this workshop. Our appreciation to Dinuka Bandara (Technical Advisor - Integrated Nutrition) and Chandrika Kularathna (Technical Specialist - Disaster Risk Reduction) for their valuable support and guidance in designing the guiding questions used to facilitate the dialogue.

ATTACHMENTS

- Slide deck
- Group photo
- During the discussion