



# *Nutrition Dialogues: Global Synthesis – Child-Friendly Version*

March 2025

# WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

The Nutrition Dialogues initiative encourages people to share what they know and feel about nutrition. It is designed especially for people who are not usually heard. Through simple workshops, participants discussed nutrition challenges in their communities and suggested solutions to make things better.



# WHO PARTICIPATED & WHERE?

**346** Nutrition Dialogue events took place in 54 countries, including Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Colombia, and Nepal. Most of the dialogue events were held locally, within communities.

**10,000** people participated in the Nutrition Dialogues, including **4,000** children and young people and **6,000** adults.

Participants included mothers, fathers, farmers, healthcare workers, teachers, government officials, students, and girls and boys from child-focused organisations.

# WHAT THEY TOLD US

**Participants identified SIX main reasons why families are at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition:**



## **1. Malnutrition increases when families do not have enough money to buy nutritious food.**

Most participants said that lack of money can lead to poor nutrition. Families often know which foods are nutritious, but they cannot afford to buy them. Some children and young people wonder why their parents economise by feeding them cheaper and less nutritious food even though they know this might impact their long-term growth, development, and well-being.

*'Poor households have limited to no income to afford the needed nutritious foods. Households in rural areas only get an income after selling their produce, and it's once per year as their farming depends on rainfed [agriculture].'* Participant from Zambia

## **2. Malnutrition increases when families have limited water, sanitation and healthcare access.**

More than half the participants said they cannot get the clean water they need to maintain hygiene, increasing the risk of illness and leading to poor nutrition. This situation is made worse if they cannot easily get help when a child or young person is sick.

*'Water is vital for us. Now, when we go into drought, there is a shortage of water; there is no drinking water for our children.'* Participant from Colombia

## **3. Malnutrition increases when farming families do not have resources like water for irrigation, seeds, and tools.**

Half of the participants mentioned that farming families may experience hunger and malnutrition when food production is reduced. This may occur when they do not have enough land for farming, adequate water for effective irrigation, the necessary equipment to work the land, or the cash to buy seeds and fertiliser.

*'My father was a farmer, but now we have no land. If we can farm again, we can provide for ourselves.'* Participant from Afghanistan

#### 4. Malnutrition increases when there are risky feeding practices in communities.

Half of the participants observed that someone's gender and age determine their food access. For example, women and girls might receive less food than men and boys in some communities. Some children and young people feel neglected when they do not receive enough nutritious food. Participants also felt that pregnant teenage girls and their children are at a higher risk of hunger and malnutrition.

*'Adolescent girls are usually impregnated by their boyfriends and abandoned with all maternal responsibilities and become themselves malnourished due to limited access to nutritious food, impacting feeding practices such as exclusive breastfeeding.'* Participant from Nigeria

#### 5. Malnutrition increases when there is poor information about nutrition and processed food.

Half of the participants felt that though they had some knowledge about nutrition, it was insufficient. They observed that some families do not know which foods to choose to ensure a balanced diet for their children. Many families rely on processed foods because they are cheaper, easy to prepare, and readily available.

*'In our village, we have a lot of vegetables, but many families prefer unhealthy snacks because they don't know how to cook the vegetables properly.'* Participant from Afghanistan

#### 6. Malnutrition decreases when there are good policies and programmes to address this issue.

Participants highlighted the importance of connecting national-level policies and institutions to the realities of families in their communities. Some suggested that people could take more responsibility for their nutrition, rather than relying on government services.

*'The absence of effective integration between the government, civil society, the private sector, and communities hinders the implementation of programmes. There is limited inter-institutional communication and a fragmented approach to resource allocation.'* Participant from Guatemala



## Participants identified **THREE** factors that can suddenly increase the risk of malnutrition:

### **1. Malnutrition can suddenly rise when there are adverse weather conditions**

Bad weather (like droughts and floods), weather-related disasters (like landslides), and salination of land can destroy crops and animals and damage farmland and roads. As a result, food becomes harder to find and more expensive.

*'Climate change is making traditional farming methods in mountainous areas less viable. Extreme weather events like floods, droughts, and heatwaves have disrupted crop production, leading to food shortages and further exacerbating malnutrition.'* Participant from Thailand

### **2. Malnutrition can suddenly increase because of criminality, conflict, and war**

Violence in communities makes it harder for families to nourish children. Many families are forced to abandon their farms and fields due to violent conflicts. When they are on the move, families may struggle to have food and adequate nutrition and face higher risks of malnutrition.

*'Participants expressed the deep interconnection between territorial security and food security. For many of them, forced displacement meant not only the loss of land and housing but also the dispossession of their traditional farming practices and access to the natural resources essential to their livelihoods.'* Participants from Colombia

### **3. Malnutrition can suddenly increase because of rapidly rising food prices**

Rapidly rising food prices may result in families eating cheaper and less healthy foods with low nutritional content. Higher prices may mean that farmers buy less seeds and fertiliser, which means they produce less. This reduces the availability of nutritious foods in homes and communities.

*'The children highlighted that parents or guardians have been constantly complaining about food prices and have noticed that the amount of food available at home has decreased.'* Participant from Angola



# WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE TO MALNUTRITION ?

- Women, children, and young people everywhere, especially those with special needs
- Families living in poverty who struggle to afford food, especially when coping with bad weather, conflict, disease outbreaks, or financial crises
- People forced to leave their communities because of weather conditions, violence, and natural disasters

## Top NINE urgent actions identified by participants

- 1. Raise families' incomes and purchasing power:** Ensure that women, in particular, can increase their income through earning more and learning how best to manage their finances. Increasing families' incomes leads to children who are better nourished, attending school, and completing their education.
- 2. Enable more children to receive nutritious school meals:** Ensure adequate funding for school meal programmes, which are vital for encouraging children to attend school regularly and complete their education. If resources are available, expand school feeding programmes to include preschool and secondary school students.
- 3. Expand conversations about nutrition:** Raise awareness about nutrition, focusing on local foods. Respect cultures and traditions in the communities while supporting families to improve nutrition. Encourage children and young people to advocate for better nutrition within their communities and among their peers.
- 4. Expand coverage of social protection programmes:** Identify people most in need and support their access to programmes to improve nutrition. Particular attention should be given to women, children, and young people, who are at higher risk of malnutrition.
- 5. Improve access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services:** Provide access to safe water for drinking, washing, and preparing food to prevent illnesses.

- 6. Improve access to good primary healthcare:** Provide families, particularly women and those from rural areas, with a strong healthcare system that promotes nutrition and helps those who are sick to recover quickly.
- 7. Ensure food systems are responsive to families' needs:** Support families to grow their own food or buy food from local farms. It is also important to train farmers so they can make a better income.
- 8. Ensure well-functioning infrastructure:** Ensure that healthcare centres, schools, electricity, roads, and clean water and sanitation facilities function effectively.
- 9. Promote good governance, policy, and transparency:** Leaders from governments, organisations, and businesses must work together to improve food security and nutrition among families.

## HOW CAN WE TAKE ACTION ON NUTRITION?

- 1. Focus on groups at greatest risk:** Actions should focus on groups at greatest risk of malnutrition, especially women and children everywhere, low-income families, and displaced people.
- 2. Make sure everyone can contribute:** Encourage more conversations between people at risk and decision-makers to explore options and solutions together. Invest time and resources in listening to the experiences of women, children, and young people – they know what works best for them and their communities. Hear the perspectives of smallholder farmers. Consider how living in cities can limit people's food choices.
- 3. Engage a wide range of stakeholders:** a) always involve communities, especially children and young people, in co-designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating nutrition actions; b) create opportunities for everyone to participate in actions that promote good nutrition; c) support the engagement of local- to national-level government leaders to work together to make nutrition a priority; and d) establish inclusive governance and transparency to monitor actions, progress, and results.

**Want to learn more about this project?** Visit: <https://nutritiondialogues.org/>



This is a child-friendly version of the *Nutrition Dialogues: Global Synthesis Summary* - available [here](#) - written by Mario Stephano.

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For further information about this publication, please contact: [info@nutritiondialogues.org](mailto:info@nutritiondialogues.org)

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