GHANA

COUNTRY SYNTHESIS REPORT

Dialogue period: 16 April – 1 July 2026

"What picture emerges across the dialogues?"

Version 1 – FINAL

Produced by 4SD Foundation with artificial intelligence.

6 October 2026

Acknowledgements

This report exists because children and community members across Ghana gave their time, their honesty and their ideas to the Nutrition Dialogues. At the centre of it are the children of Kaliako, Dagomba, Bulingyin, Kwaekese, Kanbonwule Beposo, Kpembe, Attaboka and Denchemoasue, who spoke openly about what they eat, what they lack, and what they think should change — and the community members, faith leaders, farmers, health workers, teachers and local government officials of Wechiau who did the same as stakeholders. None of what follows would exist without their willingness to be heard.

We acknowledge the local Convenors and facilitators who made each dialogue possible — Bryte Akoli, Godsway Dzahini, Alberta Danso, Susan Kumahor, Williams Nkikia and Stephen Matey — and the World Vision Ghana Area Programme teams who organised and documented these conversations, under the national coordination of Joshua Okomongye. We also acknowledge the Ghana Health Service and Ghana Education Service colleagues who co-facilitated the Bodi dialogue, and the Record Keepers whose careful documentation makes this synthesis possible.

How to read this report

What this report represents

This report is a qualitative synthesis of eight Nutrition Dialogues Feedback Forms from Ghana held between 16 April and 1 July 2026. It brings together what participants — mostly children, with one dialogue of adult stakeholders — said about nutrition in their own communities. It identifies issues, experiences, relationships and proposed actions emerging from these records. It does not claim to be statistically representative of Ghana as a whole, and it does not speak for communities, regions or population groups beyond those who took part in these eight dialogues.

How to understand the findings

This report brings together what recurs across the dialogues while preserving meaningful differences and locally significant findings that appear in only one or two records. Where a finding is widely shared, the report says so; where it comes from a single community, the report says that too, rather than implying a wider pattern than the evidence supports. Actions presented in this report are actions participants themselves proposed or are already taking — they are not recommendations from 4SD, World Vision or any other organisation. What these findings mean for programmes, policy or further action is a question for the interpretation process that follows this report, supported by the accompanying Interpretation Guide.

Evidence limitations

Three limitations shape how this report should be read. First, the evidence base is heavily weighted toward children's dialogues — seven of the eight records — with institutional and adult community perspectives resting on a single Stakeholder Dialogue held in Wechiau, Wa West. Findings in Section 6 should be read as what that one dialogue contributed, not as a representative stakeholder view for Ghana. Second, several dialogues record that they were conducted partly in a local language (Twi, Likpakpaanl) alongside English, but none of the records document how the English-language Feedback Form was produced from that spoken dialogue; the wording in this report should be understood as a facilitator-mediated account rather than a verbatim transcript. Third, some participation records in the underlying Feedback Forms contain inconsistencies in recorded participant numbers; where this affects a specific finding, it is noted at that point.

Executive Summary

Across seven communities and one multi-stakeholder dialogue held between April and July 2026, a consistent picture emerges: Ghanaian children know a great deal about what good nutrition looks like, but knowing is not the same as having. Meals in every children's dialogue lean heavily on starchy staples — banku, fufu, cassava, yam, rice — with protein, fruit and vegetables present in principle but scarce in practice. Poverty and the cost of food are the most consistently named reasons why — named by children in Kaliako, Dagomba, Bulingyin and Kpembe, and by adult stakeholders in Wechiau. Seasonal scarcity compounds this in at least two communities in Wa West, where the practice of selling harvested crops quickly for cash — driven by financial need rather than poor planning — leaves households with less to eat as the lean season deepens.

School feeding surfaces in five of the eight dialogues, but not as one uniform complaint: in Kwaekese it is about small portions, in Bulingyin about the exclusion of older pupils, in Kpandai about food safety and quality, and at the policy level in Wechiau and East Gonja about funding and political interference. Household practice matters too — children in Kaliako and Dagomba raised the denial of food as a form of punishment and asked that it stop, alongside hygiene lapses in cooking that several dialogues described.

Children in these communities are not waiting passively for solutions. In four communities they described things they are already doing — practising hygiene, avoiding waste, eating what balance they can — and in Bulingyin they have started their own school garden to supplement what the lean season takes away. The single stakeholder dialogue, held in Wechiau, adds a layer the children's dialogues do not reach: cultural food taboos restricting protein for children and pregnant women, limited male involvement in feeding, recurring childhood illness, and gaps in local government by-laws and coordination. The barrier to better nutrition in Ghana's communities is rarely a lack of understanding — it is the practical, economic and sometimes cultural distance between understanding and being able to act on it.

1. Introduction

The Nutrition Dialogues bring children and communities into conversation about nutrition in their own words, in their own settings. This report synthesises eight such dialogues held across Ghana between April and July 2026, as part of World Vision Ghana's Nutrition Dialogues Phase 2 under the ENOUGH Campaign. Reading these dialogues together makes it possible to see what recurs across different communities and regions, what remains locally distinctive, how participants themselves connect one issue to another, what different groups of participants bring into view, and what participants believe should change.

This report follows a fixed progression, used consistently across the Nutrition Dialogues country series: issues → connections → children's perspectives → stakeholder perspectives → participant-proposed actions → what the dialogues help us see. Section 3 sets out the substantive nutrition issues participants described. Section 4 examines how participants themselves connected those issues to one another. Sections 5 and 6 consider what becomes visible when children's and stakeholders' evidence are each read in their own right. Section 7 brings together what participants are already doing and what they are asking others to do. Section 8 steps back to identify what becomes visible only when the whole evidence base is read together.

2. About the Nutrition Dialogues

This synthesis draws on eight Feedback Forms, each corresponding to one Nutrition Dialogue held in Ghana between 16 April and 1 July 2026. Seven were Children's Workshops; one, held in Wechiau, Wa West, was a Stakeholder Dialogue bringing together community members, farmers, faith leaders, health workers, local government officials and a smaller group of children and youth.

The eight dialogues span seven Area Programmes across seven regions: Krachi Nchumuru (Oti-area), Sekyere Afram Plains (Ashanti), Wa West (Upper West, two dialogues), Kwahu Afram Plains North (Eastern), Kpandai (Northern), East Gonja (Savannah) and Bodi (Western North). Most children's dialogues recorded twenty participants, evenly or near-evenly split between girls and boys; the Wechiau Stakeholder Dialogue recorded forty-eight participants across a broader range of ages and stakeholder groups. Three dialogues explicitly recorded that discussion took place bilingually — in Twi and English (Kaliako, East Gonja) and in Likpakpaanl and English (Kpandai) — reflecting the linguistic diversity of the communities involved.

Full dialogue-level detail is provided in Annex A.

3. What nutrition issues emerge across the Dialogues?

Meals lean on staples, and protein stays out of reach

In every children's dialogue in this evidence base, meals centre on starchy staples — banku, fufu, cassava, yam, rice, ampesi — eaten far more often than the fruit, vegetables and protein that would balance them. In Kwaekese, some children described meals as literally "banku and pepper only," with no eggs, meat or fish. In Dagomba, banku recurs "multiple times a week," and children linked this directly to their limited intake of protein, vitamins and minerals. In Bulingyin, the shortfall in protein was described not only as a matter of availability but of distribution within the household: children reported that adults typically receive the larger share of meat and fish, leaving children with little or none. Fruit fares little better — several dialogues described it as available only briefly, in season, rather than as a reliable part of the diet.

Even where families understand good nutrition, affording it is another matter

Poverty and the cost of food were named repeatedly as the central obstacle — not a lack of understanding of what good nutrition requires. Children in Kpembe (East Gonja) put this most directly: even when they understand the importance of healthy eating, their families often cannot afford the variety of foods a balanced diet requires, and rising food prices make fruit, vegetables and protein-rich food harder to reach specifically. A similar separation between knowledge and means appeared in Kwaekese, where children's grasp of food groups and their function was described as clear and confident even as their actual diets remained narrow and carbohydrate-heavy. This is not a story about children lacking nutrition knowledge; it is a story about the distance between what they know and what their households can afford.

School meals fall short, but not in the same way twice

Five of the eight dialogues raised school feeding, and each pointed to a different shortfall. In Kwaekese, the complaint was about small portions and low variety. In Bulingyin, it was structural: Junior High School pupils are excluded from the School Feeding Programme altogether, and the meals provided to younger pupils were described as monotonous and nutritionally thin. In Kanbonwule Beposo (Kpandai), children raised a more troubling set of concerns about food quality and safety — stones or pebbles in meals, excessive salt, undercooked food, and meals not cooked or served consistently — alongside a specific request that cooks be held accountable so that food intended for children is not diverted or sold elsewhere. At the policy level, both the Wechiau stakeholders and the children of East Gonja called for school feeding to be better and more reliably funded, with the Wechiau dialogue additionally naming political interference as a factor undermining consistency. These are not one complaint but several distinct ones, each rooted in what a particular school and community actually experiences.

What children learn about food doesn't always reach the kitchen

Limited nutrition knowledge among parents and caregivers was named directly as an underlying factor in three dialogues — Dagomba, Bodi and Kpembe — and was the basis for a request for parent- and community-level nutrition education in at least five of the eight records. In Dagomba, children connected this directly to specific household practices: reliance on artificial spices and lower-quality ingredients, and inconsistent hygiene during food preparation. In Bodi, the same underlying concern was

framed around food choice, preparation and preservation more broadly, in a dialogue that was itself co-facilitated by Ghana Health Service and Ghana Education Service alongside World Vision.

Household practices children want changed

Beyond affordability, several dialogues raised household practices that children themselves want to see change. In Kaliako and Dagomba, children raised the denial of food as a form of punishment, and asked parents directly to stop the practice. Both dialogues also raised hygiene lapses during cooking, including preparing food without handwashing. These findings appear in only two of the eight dialogues, Kaliako and Dagomba specifically, and should not be read as a general description of Ghanaian households more broadly.

Water, hygiene and the wider food environment

In Bodi, limited access to safe water was raised as a constraint on both hygiene and food preparation, compounding the effects of poor food-handling practice described there and elsewhere. In Kwaekese, children connected the food environment to infrastructure beyond the household or the farm: poor roads and community insecurity, they said, make it harder and more expensive to transport and access food, particularly during the dry season when local supply is already limited.

4. How do these issues connect?

Participants across these dialogues did not simply list problems; in several places they explained, in their own words, how one thing leads to another.

In Wa West, selling the harvest too soon can mean hunger months later

In Bulingyin, children explained that families often sell most of their harvest immediately after it comes in, to meet pressing financial needs — leaving little stored for later in the year, when the lean season arrives. In the Wechiau Stakeholder Dialogue, held in the same Wa West district three weeks later, adult stakeholders described the same practice in almost the same terms, tying it to seasonal food insecurity that intensifies specifically in June and July. This connection is specific to Wa West, not evidence of a nationwide pattern: children and adults in other regions did not describe this same mechanism, though several described seasonal scarcity in more general terms.

When school meals are missed or poor, children say they can't concentrate

In Kanbonwule Beposo, children drew a direct line from irregular or inadequate school meals to hunger, and from hunger to difficulty concentrating in class. This connection was drawn only in Kanbonwule Beposo (Kpandai) — no other dialogue in this evidence base draws the same link to learning specifically — but it is a clear, first-person account of how a nutrition gap becomes an education gap in that community.

Practices at home ripple outward

Two dialogues described a single household practice producing more than one negative effect at once. In Kaliako, children explained that poor meal planning leads both to nutritional gaps and to food being wasted — the same underlying practice, two different consequences. In Kpembe, children described

financial strain on farming households as reducing both the food a family has available and the income it can earn — again, one constraint working in two directions at once. Neither of these should be read as evidence of a single national pattern; they are two separate, locally specific illustrations of how one household-level constraint can have compounding effects.

In Wechiau, belief, farming pressure and children's diets are separate parts of the picture

The cultural food taboos stakeholders described in Wechiau and the specific dietary patterns children reported in their own dialogues cover different ground: children's dialogues do not raise the cultural beliefs stakeholders described, and the Wechiau dialogue does not describe children's specific eating patterns beyond what it reports directly. Wechiau stakeholders also described a decline in crop yields linked to changing rainfall and the practice of selling crops quickly for cash as separate pressures on farming households, rather than as one connected sequence.

5. What do children tell us?

Children know what good nutrition looks like — but cannot always access it

Across the seven children's dialogues, one message is striking: children understand a great deal about good nutrition, even when they cannot access the foods they know they need. Across every community, children could describe what a balanced meal should contain — protein, vegetables and fruit alongside staples — and in several dialogues they used this understanding with real precision. The children of Bodi discussed specific nutrients — iron, vitamin A, calcium, folate and zinc — in relation to their own growth, in a dialogue co-facilitated by health and education services. The children of Kpembe explicitly separated knowing what good nutrition requires from being able to afford it — a distinction adults might be tempted to make for them, but which here came directly from the children themselves.

The pressures children experience differ from one community to another

Read together, the children's accounts do not describe one uniform experience, but locally distinct pressures on the same underlying reality. In Kwaekese and Dagomba, the pressure is largely about what is missing from the plate — protein, variety and balance. In Bulingyin, it is about a lean season that can mean entire days without food, and about a household norm that gives adults the larger share of what little protein is available. In Kaliako and Dagomba, children spoke candidly about being denied food as a form of discipline, and asked directly that it stop. In Kanbonwule Beposo, the pressure centres on school: meals that are irregular, sometimes unsafe, and tied by children themselves to their ability to concentrate in class.

Children do not always see these pressures in the same way

Differences of view were preserved rather than smoothed over within several dialogues. Children disagreed among themselves about whether cassava and yam, eaten consistently, count as adequate nourishment or merely as fullness without balance; about whether parents who sell their harvest quickly are failing to plan or simply responding to financial necessity they cannot avoid; and about whether the tradition of giving adults larger protein portions is acceptable or something that should change. These are not contradictions to be resolved — they are evidence of how differently children in similar circumstances can weigh the same trade-offs.

Children are already acting, not simply asking others to act

Across the seven dialogues, children rarely presented themselves only as people something is being done to. In Kaliako, Dagomba, Bodi and Kpembe, children described things they themselves already do or intend to keep doing — practising hygiene, avoiding waste, eating what balance they can manage, and helping with food preparation at home. In Bulingyin, this agency took a more visible, collective form: children reported that they have already started their own school garden to supplement what the lean season takes away.

Taken together, these dialogues describe not passive recipients of a nutrition programme, but young people with a clear, often sophisticated grasp of their own situation. They are already acting within the limits available to them, while asking the adults around them — parents, teachers and government — to close the rest of the gap.

6. What do stakeholders tell us?

The stakeholder evidence comes from a single dialogue in Wechiau, Wa West, bringing together forty-eight participants — community members, farmers, faith leaders, health workers, local government officials, civil society representatives and a smaller group of children and youth. It therefore does not represent stakeholder perspectives across Ghana. Read on its own terms, however, it adds dimensions that are largely absent from the children's dialogues.

Stakeholders bring cultural, health and governance dimensions into view

Stakeholders described specific cultural food taboos shaping what children and pregnant women are permitted to eat — restrictions on eggs and meat, and, among some participants, a stated belief that eating meat makes children prone to theft. They described limited involvement by men in child feeding, reinforced by social stigma discouraging greater involvement. Health workers linked recurring childhood illness — malaria, diarrhoea and worm infections — directly to undermined nutritional status. Local government representatives pointed to a structural gap: the absence of comprehensive by-laws addressing child nutrition and weak collaboration between the agencies that would need to act together to close it.

From a different vantage point, stakeholders see some of the same pressures

The Wechiau dialogue also echoed, from an institutional vantage point, several pressures the children's dialogues described from within households and communities: the practice of selling harvested crops quickly for cash, concern about the reliability of school feeding — here attributed partly to political interference — and recognition that limited nutrition awareness in the community shapes what ends up on a plate.

The two perspectives are not equivalent, but they illuminate some of the same pressures from different positions. Where the children's dialogues describe these pressures as lived, everyday experience, the Wechiau stakeholders described them as patterns visible across a wider community and requiring coordinated institutional response.

Different stakeholders emphasise different parts of the system

Differences of emphasis among the Wechiau participants themselves were also preserved rather than assumed away. Community members tended to foreground economic constraint and food insecurity; faith leaders tended to foreground cultural belief and behaviour; and local government representatives tended to foreground governance gaps. The dialogue's own record characterises these differences as complementary rather than conflicting, consistent with how the different perspectives are described in the record.

7. What actions do participants propose?

Across the eight dialogues, participants proposed and, in some cases, are already taking action at three distinct levels: what they are doing themselves, what they ask of households and caregivers, and what they ask of schools, institutions and government.

What participants are already doing

Four children's dialogues — Kaliako, Dagomba, Bodi and Kpembe — recorded children's own commitments to practices already under way or newly adopted: washing hands before eating, covering food, avoiding waste, eating fruit and vegetables where available, and supporting parents with food-related tasks at home. In Bulingyin, this self-directed action took a more visible, collective form: children reported having already established a school garden to supplement their diets during the lean season and to build practical agricultural skills — the clearest example in this evidence base of participant-led action already under way rather than merely proposed.

What participants ask of households and caregivers

Several dialogues addressed recommendations directly to parents and caregivers: cook with patience and attention to hygiene; prepare varied, balanced meals rather than repeating the same staples; stop denying food as a form of punishment; involve children themselves in planning the household's weekly menu, both to reduce monotony and to cut down on waste; and, where possible, store more food after harvest rather than selling it all immediately.

What participants ask of schools, institutions and government

The largest cluster of proposed action concerns school feeding and public investment. Participants across several dialogues called for consistent, adequately funded school meals that include protein, oil and vegetables, cooked daily and free of political interference; in Kpandai specifically, children asked for stronger monitoring to prevent food safety lapses and to ensure food reaches them rather than being diverted. Several dialogues called for expanded agricultural support — irrigation, farm inputs, technical training, crop diversification and small-livestock rearing — to reduce dependence on rainfall and strengthen household food production. Nutrition education for parents and communities, delivered through schools, health services and community structures, was requested in at least five dialogues. Children in Kwaekese and Kpembe additionally called for improved roads, community security and food-price measures respectively, reflecting the specific barriers their own communities described in Section 3. The Wechiau stakeholders added a further, institutional layer of proposed action not present in the

children's dialogues: a formal multi-stakeholder coordination platform spanning health, agriculture and social welfare; expanded enrolment in Ghana's LEAP social protection programme ahead of the lean season; and the development of local by-laws addressing child nutrition.

Throughout, these are the actions participants themselves proposed for themselves and for others — not recommendations formulated by 4SD, World Vision or any other organisation on their behalf.

8. What do the Dialogues help us see?

Reading the eight dialogues together — issues, connections, children's and stakeholders' perspectives, and proposed action — surfaces a small number of observations that are not visible from any single dialogue alone.

Understanding and affording are two different problems, and closing one does not close the other

Children in Kwaekese and Kpembe articulated a distinction adults do not always make for them: that knowing what good nutrition requires is not the same as being able to provide it. The children of Kwaekese demonstrated confident, accurate knowledge of food groups even while describing consistently unbalanced diets; the children of Kpembe stated the point directly, that awareness alone will not resolve the problem without addressing the cost and availability of food. Alongside poverty and the cost of food as the central constraint named throughout this evidence base, this suggests that nutrition education — though repeatedly requested by participants themselves — addresses only part of what stands between children and better nutrition in these communities.

The same broad problem wears a different face in every community

School feeding is the clearest example: named as a concern in five of the eight dialogues, but never in the same way twice — small portions in one community, structural exclusion of older pupils in another, food-safety failures in a third, underfunding and political interference at the policy level. This is not inconsistency in the evidence; it is what a genuinely locally grounded set of dialogues should look like, and it argues against treating "improve school feeding" as a single, uniform fix rather than a set of related but distinct local problems.

Children are already part of the response, not only its object

Across four separate communities, children described things they are already doing to improve their own nutrition, and in one community — Bulingyin — that agency has taken the concrete, collective form of a self-initiated school garden, begun without waiting for outside support. Alongside the actions participants asked of households and government in Section 7, this suggests that children in these communities are not simply asking to be helped; several are already acting within the room they have, while identifying clearly where that room runs out.

Two vantage points, one incomplete picture

The children's dialogues and the single Wechiau stakeholder dialogue illuminate genuinely different layers of the same underlying situation — household practice and lived experience on one side, cultural belief, gender dynamics, health and governance on the other — without contradicting each other,

because they were largely never asked about the same things. This is a reminder that this evidence base, valuable as it is, is not yet complete: what children experience at the level of institutions, culture and governance, and what adult stakeholders understand of children's own daily experience and agency, both remain areas this particular set of dialogues could not reach.

9. Conclusion

Across seven communities and one multi-stakeholder dialogue, the Ghana 2026 Nutrition Dialogues describe a consistent underlying story, told in locally distinctive ways. Children understand what good nutrition requires; poverty and the cost of food are the most consistently named reasons why their diets fall short of it; school feeding, meant to help close that gap, falls short in different ways in different places; and household practices — some rooted in necessity, others in habit or belief — shape what actually reaches a child's plate day to day. Running through all of this is evidence that children are not passive: in several communities they are already acting, in small and sometimes larger ways, on the parts of the problem within their own reach, while asking clearly for what remains beyond it.

This report has not sought to make the evidence more complete, more causal, or more uniform than eight dialogues, held over eleven weeks in seven different communities, can responsibly support. Its purpose has been to bring together what these dialogues show, preserve what is genuinely shared and what is genuinely local, and set out, in participants' own terms, both what they are already doing and what they are asking others to do. What this evidence means for programming, policy or further investment in Ghana is a question for the interpretation and review process that follows this report.

Annex A — Dialogues Included in the Synthesis

Dialogue ID	Type	Location	Event date	Participants (as recorded)
60391	Children's Workshop	Kwaekese, Kwahu Afram Plains North AP, Eastern Region	16 April 2026	20 (10F/10M); ages 12–18
60375	Children's Workshop	Kaliako, Krachi Nchumuru AP	23 April 2026	20 (7F/13M); ages 12–17
60383	Children's Workshop	Dagomba, Sekyere Afram Plains AP, Ashanti Region	23 April 2026	20 (10F/10M)
60388	Children's Workshop	Bulingyin, Wa West AP, Upper West Region	5 May 2026	20 (10F/10M); ages 10–17
60379	Stakeholder Dialogue	Wechiau, Wa West District, Upper West Region	18 May 2026	48 (19F/29M) across community, faith, health, government, farming, education and youth groups
60463	Children's Workshop	Attaboka & Denchemoasue, Bodi AP, Western North Region	18 May 2026	Recorded inconsistently between 20 and 40 plus 7 teachers across the two communities
60528	Children's Workshop	Kanbonwule Beposo, Kpandai District, Northern Region	8 June 2026	20 (10F/10M)
60799	Children's Workshop	Kpembe, East Gonja AP, Savannah Region	1 July 2026	20 (10F/10M); ages 12–17