



# INPUTS FOR AN ELEMENTS PAPER ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

October 15, 2024

## HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION ARE PARAMOUNT DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious diets is not only an essential component of everyone's fundamental rights, but also a key factor to ensure children thrive and develop their full potential, with lifetime benefits. Conscious of this, the UN proclaimed the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) and adopted the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Yet, today, the world is off-track to meet the global 2025 targets to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition, and to reach the Zero Hunger goal.

Today, only about a third of all countries are on track to achieve the SDG targets for wasting (34%) and stunting (29%). Regarding stunting, despite a steady decline during the last decade, faster progress is needed. According to the latest available estimates, 22.5% of children under age 5 worldwide are stunted, with a projected 128.5 million for 2030. Regarding acute malnutrition, an estimated 6.8% of children under age 5 worldwide are affected by wasting. More than 95% of all children with malnutrition live in Africa and Asia<sup>1</sup>.

Acute and chronic malnutrition rates go hand in hand with global hunger and its social determinants. These include limited access to essential health, social protection, and WASH services, poor feeding and care practices, and food insecurity. In fact, the prevalence of severe food insecurity has increased from 7.5% in 2019 to 9.1% in 2020, remaining almost

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. Levels and trends in child malnutrition: UNICEF / WHO / World Bank Group Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates: Key findings of the 2023 edition. New York: UNICEF and WHO; 2023.

unchanged since then<sup>2</sup>. The vulnerability space where hunger and malnutrition linger and intensify also increases with gender inequality, acute emergencies, poverty, protracted conflicts, forced displacement and the effects of climate change. The priority group includes pregnant and lactating women and children under two years of age, to leverage the 1000-day window of opportunity. However, it should also be extended to older children, including adolescents, who are often neglected.

Yet, malnutrition can be stopped with political commitment and adequate financing, if addressed both through humanitarian aid and international development cooperation.

## **THE GLOBAL FINANCING FRAMEWORK MUST PRIORITIZE NUTRITION**

The Outcome Document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) should reflect a firm commitment to stop malnutrition in all its forms and hunger, through an increase in international development cooperation financing for nutrition, and prioritisation of evidence-based nutrition interventions in low- and middle-income countries, to accelerate progress towards SDG 2.

The investment should concentrate on a set of multilevel and multisectoral evidence-based actions. These include, first, nutrition-specific actions to address the immediate determinants of child nutrition and treat acute malnutrition, integrated in health systems with strong primary health care foundations, a firm commitment for community engagement, and ambitious universal health coverage goals. They also include nutrition-sensitive development interventions that tackle critical underlying determinants of undernutrition in other sectors such as food security, water and sanitation, behaviour change, and social protection, through gender transformative approaches to address the root and structural causes upon which inequalities are built.

The World Bank estimates that, for the next decade, an additional \$12.8 billion per year will be needed for nutrition<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, a global agreement should be established to ensure that a minimum percentage of Official Development Assistance is consistently allocated to

---

<sup>2</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2024. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Shekar, Meera, Kyoko Shibata Okamura, Mireya Vilar-Compte, and Chiara Dell’Aira, eds. 2024. Investment Framework for Nutrition 2024. Human Development Perspectives series. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-2162-2.

nutrition urgently and over the long term. For every dollar invested in addressing undernutrition, a return of \$23 is expected. This investment will not only help avert an estimated 6.2 million deaths among children under five in the next decade, but also enhance cognitive development and educational outcomes, thereby increasing productivity, economic growth and social development.

On the other hand, the cost of inaction would be unbearable economically and socially. It is estimated that failing to increase Official Development Assistance for nutrition would result in \$41 trillion in productivity losses and economic and social costs over the next ten years. Additionally, the ensuing hunger and food insecurity would also undermine the social contract and foster violence, with severe consequences for political instability and governance, especially in fragile contexts and in low- and middle-income countries.

## **INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FINANCING FOR NUTRITION MUST BE EFFICIENT AND TRANSPARENT**

Accountability mechanisms are fundamental to improve transparency and efficiency of development financing for nutrition. Commitments can only be pursued and achieved if clear reporting systems allow the tracking of funding disbursements and their impact, per sector. A rigorous monitoring framework is also vital to ensure compliance with commitments related to nutrition and food security, while also enabling necessary response to emerging challenges in the long-term.

To make the fight against hunger effective and efficient, financing for development must also be synergistic with humanitarian financing, as recommended by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD<sup>4</sup>. However, it is a priority that this synergy takes place within a framework of operational coherence, coordination and strategic collaboration, ensuring that both streams of funding complement rather than duplicate efforts. The fight against hunger and malnutrition must be pursued through a Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach, ensuring there are enough resources for both international development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

---

<sup>4</sup> OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019