

The right nutrition at the right time enables children, families and communities to reach their full potential. Investments in nutrition catalyse improvements in health, education, poverty reduction and resilience.



## CHANGING LIVES

A circular logo with the text "INSIGHT SERIES" in white, set against a dark background. The logo is positioned on the right side of the page, overlapping the image of a hand holding a child's hand.

INSIGHT  
SERIES

# Nutrition

## THE CHALLENGE

Today, the world is facing a food and nutrition crisis of unprecedented proportions. After more than a decade of progress, malnutrition is on the rise. This risks the lives and well-being of millions of vulnerable women and children. Without urgent action, it will undermine the development and resilience of current and future generations of children.

Malnutrition underpins almost half of all child deaths globally, but it also causes life-long health and development challenges for the

children who survive. Poor nutrition during the first 1,000 days can lead to irreversible impairments in physical growth and cognitive development. These challenges persist over time as children affected by malnutrition in their early years are more likely to do poorly in school and earn less as adults compared with their well-nourished peers.

Furthermore, women and girls nutritional status impacts their own health and life opportunities, as well as that of any children they have, perpetuating a vicious circle of malnutrition.



### CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

**45M** suffering from  
**WASTING**

**149M** suffering from  
**STUNTING**

**39M** are overweight  
**OR OBESE**



### PREGNANT AND BREAST-FEEDING WOMEN

**32M**

suffer from some form  
**OF MICRONUTRIENT  
DEFICIENCY**



### PEOPLE

more than **2BN** are affected by one  
of more forms of  
**MICRONUTRIENT  
DEFICIENCY**

**2.2BN** are overweight  
**OR OBESE**

more than **3BN** a healthy diet  
**CANNOT AFFORD**

The challenge is both simple and clear: how to meet nutritional needs of children and women to save lives, boost health and productivity and set current and future generations on a path of resilience and prosperity?

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Investing in nutrition is one of the most cost-effective enablers of sustainable development. It is crucial for the resilience and prosperity of individuals, communities and nations. Good nutrition builds human capital, as it provides the foundation for long-term health and productivity.

Ending malnutrition is possible. There are proven, cost-effective solutions that can prevent malnutrition and help reverse the damage done to already malnourished children. Every US\$1 invested in nutrition can generate US\$16 in returns.

WFP is committed to delivering nutrition assistance in emergencies, while also tackling the root causes of malnutrition so the most vulnerable are better equipped to cope with future shocks. We **target those most at risk** and focus on **transformative and sustainable** actions.

### Targeting those most at risk

Even before this global crisis, healthy diets were unaffordable for 3.1 billion people. The situation is especially critical in fragile settings where access to sufficient nutritious food was already limited.

WFP supports government-driven solutions to reduce malnutrition, while providing direct assistance in contexts where the capabilities of national systems are restricted. WFP works towards healthier diets for all, from ensuring minimum nutrient adequacy in emergencies, to supporting healthier diets for households over the longer term. We recognize that all forms of malnutrition have common root causes, including poverty, inequality and poor diets.

WFP prioritizes women's and children's essential nutrient needs in the crucial 1,000-day window to maximize impact on health and

long-term well-being. We focus on reaching those with highest vulnerability, including young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and people living with HIV.

**The first 1000 DAYS** - a unique window to change lives and transform communities

Good nutrition during pregnancy and through a child's second birthday is fundamental for building healthy brains and bodies, giving children the best opportunity to develop to their full potential. Investing in nutrition in this period give 16 dollars return for every dollar invested.

Malnutrition during this critical period can have irreversible life-long consequences: vulnerability to disease, poorer school performance and lower future earnings, holding back the development of individuals and communities.

From conception 2 years

## Be transformative

Nutrition is at the heart of the SDGs since it has a unique transformative potential. Progress on nutrition catalyzes further gains across education and health, gender equality, poverty reduction and resilience.

We can only achieve the goal of ending all forms of malnutrition by working together across sectors. This requires building sustainable food systems that deliver nutritious diets within planetary boundaries and providing equitable health services and social protection systems that help the most vulnerable afford and access nutritious food.

WFP uses nutrition-sensitive approaches to address underlying causes of malnutrition and build resilience. This means supporting government systems to integrate key nutrition actions. It also means ensuring all WFP programmes contribute towards improved nutrition, fulfilling the ambition of WFP's Strategic Plan. WFP continuously strengthens its food and cash assistance, towards fulfilling



our commitment made at the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit. We will ensure that at least 80 percent of the people we serve get not only enough food, but also the right combination of nutrients needed to survive and to thrive.

For example, through nutrition-sensitive social protection we support vulnerable households to access more healthy diets. WFP works towards transforming food systems to increase availability, access and affordability of nutritious foods while stimulating demand. This could include supporting increased production, reducing post-harvest loss and improving processing of nutritious foods, while enabling scale up of fortified staple foods and strengthening retailer capacity.

## Sustaining futures

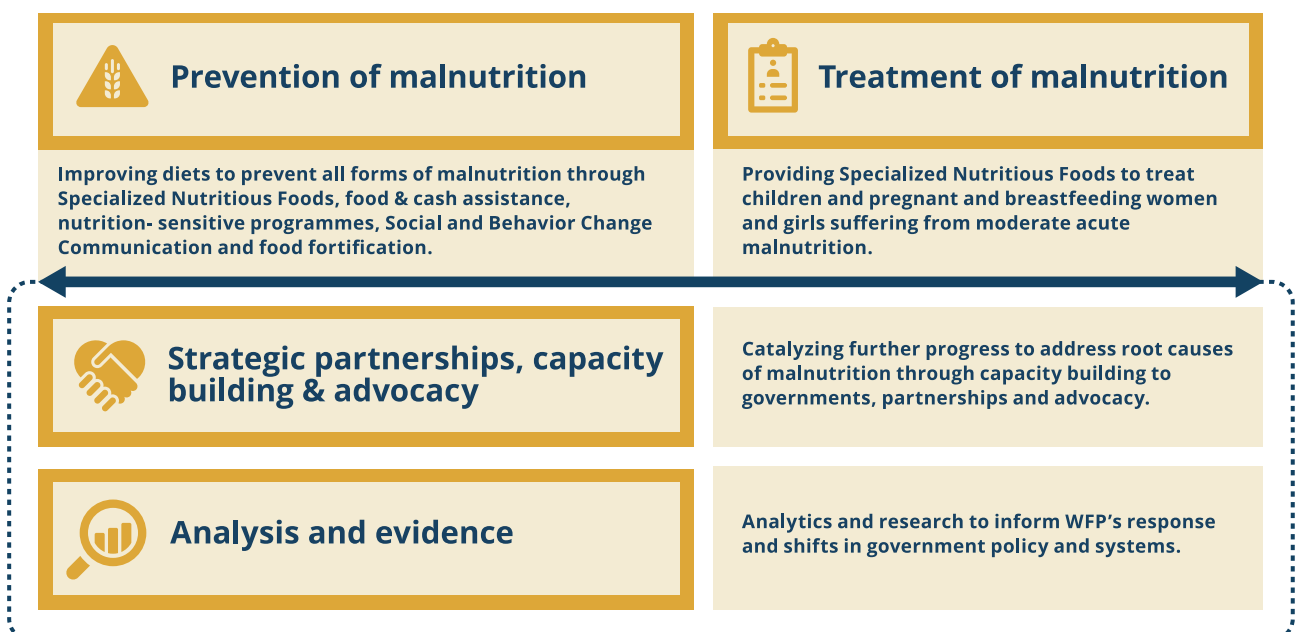
To end malnutrition, we need to focus on preventing malnutrition, breaking intergenerational cycles of malnutrition through investing in women and girls nutrition, while strengthening national systems and building resilience.

### Prevention of malnutrition

Preventing malnutrition can avert needless deaths and save generations of children from a future of illness, poor school results and poverty. In 2021, WFP reached 11 million vulnerable women and children with malnutrition prevention programmes.

As the world's largest provider of humanitarian food assistance with a reach to over 152 million people, WFP has the potential to improve the nutrition of an unparalleled number of people through its food and cash assistance. This includes providing Specialized Nutritious Foods as a complement to general household assistance and cash top-ups to help people buy nutritious foods where markets are functioning. In addition, social behaviour change communication (SBCC) helps encourage optimal feeding practices and healthy diets.

WFP also aims to address micronutrient deficiencies or "hidden hunger". To do this, we provide specialized nutrient supplements



for vulnerable groups and fill nutrient gaps at population level through food fortification. WFP distributes fortified foods through our own programmes while supporting governments to adopt food fortification policies.

### **Invest in women and girls**

Within humanitarian contexts, women, adolescent girls and children are at particularly high risk of malnutrition. Improving the nutrition of women and adolescent girls is fundamental. It is crucial for breaking intergenerational cycles of malnutrition, poverty and exclusion, as malnourished mothers often give birth to malnourished babies. Ensuring women can access and afford nutritious foods – especially before and during pregnancy and while breastfeeding – is critical to preventing malnutrition in all its forms.

In 2021, WFP supported over 7 million pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls with malnutrition prevention and treatment. We also supported SBCC to improve knowledge and behaviours on maternal and child nutrition and care practices, reaching over 35 million people.

### **Resilience**

Good nutrition is both an outcome and determinant of individual, household and community resilience. Well-nourished populations are better able to lift themselves out of poverty and to withstand the impacts of shocks and crises. Meanwhile, households affected by shocks and stressors are more at risk of malnutrition. Without efforts to safeguard nutrition, resilience will be undermined. Similarly, sustainable nutrition improvements can only be achieved with targeted efforts to build resilience among the most vulnerable. Thus, nutrition and resilience efforts must be implemented in tandem. WFP invests in multi-sectoral programmes and platforms to tackle the drivers of malnutrition and enhance resilience.

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## **WHY WFP?**

### **1 Unparalleled reach and delivery capacity**

WFP is uniquely positioned to address food-related drivers of malnutrition among those most at risk and has unrivalled capacity to respond at scale. In 2021, WFP reached more than 23 million women and children in 51 countries with malnutrition prevention and treatment. We also supported nutrition sensitive interventions in resilience, food and social protection programmes across 69 countries.

### **2 Transforming policies and systems, while driving innovation**

Through our analytical capacity and technical assistance to governments, WFP helps to ensure national policies and systems deliver improved nutrition. WFP has supported over 40 governments to identify and address barriers to healthy diets through its Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis. Our Conditional On-Demand Assistance (CODA) initiative creates a digital identity for malnourished children and tracks services to improve their wellbeing.

### **3 Leveraging strategic partnerships to achieve more together**

WFP works with governments and a multitude of partners, including civil society, UN, business and academia. Its partnership with Royal DSM and Brighter Living Foundation drives production and consumption of fortified rice, reaching over 15 million people. WFP is a key player in global initiatives such as the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and UN Nutrition.

### **4 Scaling up in response to the Global Food Crisis**

WFP has scaled up its nutrition operations to reach more people than ever before. Adapting to the crisis, WFP fills critical nutrient gaps by strengthening social safety nets for those most at risk, distributes more fortified staples, and uses cash to facilitate access to nutritious foods.