



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Fill The Nutrient Gap Zambia

Short Summary Report

The problem of malnutrition and the need for investment in social protection and livelihood support in Zambia

Why does nutrition matter?

- **Malnutrition remains a serious concern in Zambia.** More than one in every three children in Zambia is stunted. Almost half of Zambia's population is multidimensionally poor, creating significant challenges in improving nutrition outcomes.
- **Malnutrition is too expensive to ignore.** Zambia Nutrition Profiles (2017) estimated that the economic productivity lost due to childhood stunting amounts to ZMW 181 billion ZMW (USD 18 billion) over one decade.
- **Nutrition is a good investment.** Generally, for every USD 1 invested in nutrition, there is a return of USD 16. Uniquely, nutrition impacts positively on a country's growth through its impact on human capital development in the form of better health, learning in school and adult productivity.

Background on the Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis: The Fill the Nutrient Gap Analysis estimated the lowest cost of a diet that meets macro and micronutrient needs (the 'nutritious diet') and the lowest cost of a diet that meets energy-only needs. It also estimated the proportion of households able to afford such diets based on food expenditure patterns in both the lean and non-lean seasons for each province of Zambia. Diet costs were calculated for a modelled household consisting of five individuals: a breastfed child, a school-age child, an adolescent girl, a lactating woman and an adult man. The analysis modelled various interventions for their potential impact on cost and affordability of a nutritious diet to compare the potential benefits of programmes and policies aimed at improving nutrition outcomes through diets. For sources used in the production of this brief, please refer to the Zambia Fill the Nutrient Gap Report (2021) available at www.wfp.org/publications/2020-fill-nutrient-gap.

Affordability is the major barrier to accessing nutritious diets in Zambia.

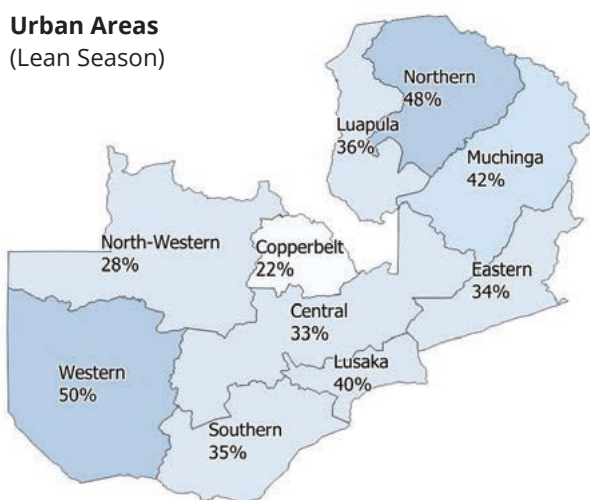
- The Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis for Zambia in 2021, led by the National Food and Nutrition Commission and supported by the World Food Programme (WFP), found that **the lowest cost nutritious diet, covering both calorie and micronutrient needs, cost on average Zambian Kwacha (ZMW) 33 per five-person modelled household per day.** This is three times as much as an energy-only diet which meets just calorie needs.
- Over half the population (53 percent) would not be able to afford this lowest cost nutritious diet,

and one in eight (13 percent) would not be able to afford the energy-only diet.

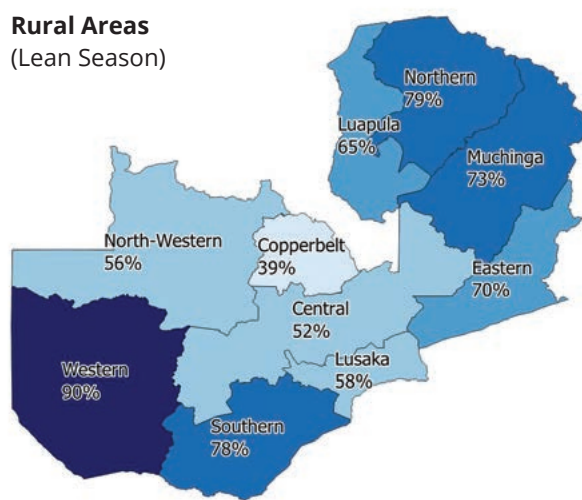
- Non-affordability of the nutritious diet varies significantly between regions and is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, as shown in Figure 1. In rural provinces such as Western and Northern, a third of households could not afford a diet covering only energy needs, and more than three quarters could not afford a nutritious diet.
- Food price inflation creates additional barriers to household access to nutritious diets. Between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of households that would not be able to afford a nutritious diet increased from 44 percent to 54 percent.

Figure 1: The percentage of households that are unable to afford a nutritious diet during the lean season, disaggregated by urban (left) and rural (right) areas

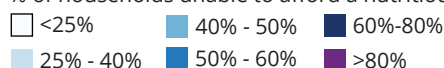
Urban Areas (Lean Season)



Rural Areas (Lean Season)



% of households unable to afford a nutritious diet



Social safety nets can support households' access to nutritious foods.

Evidence from the World Bank has found that cash transfer programmes like Zambia's Social Cash Transfer and its Social Disability Transfer lead to multiplicative improvements in household welfare, but current coverage of programmes is not proportional to the scale of poverty. The affordability gap is the distance between a household's current expenditure on food and how much is needed to purchase a diet that meets their nutritional needs. In Zambia, the poorest 50 percent of rural households would have, on average, an affordability gap of ZMW 8 per day to buy the lowest cost nutritious diet. Cash transfer programmes can help to close the gap. Based on transfer values from the time of analysis (2021) and assuming the five-person modelled household spends two thirds of transfers on food, the Social Cash Transfer would cover 10 percent of the household's

cost of the nutritious diet, while the Social Disability Transfer would cover 21 percent of the cost. To ensure cash transfers target nutrition, they can be linked to nutrition-sensitive services like healthcare or social and behaviour change interventions, engendering long-term impacts on household welfare.

In rural areas, livelihood support programmes can be an effective tool for improving household purchasing power and strengthening local food systems.

Smallholder agriculture provides an opportunity to support households' access to nutritious diets, but production continues to be oriented towards staples. In rural areas, up to one third of the total amount of food consumed comes from own production, indicating that household production is a major pathway to supporting consumption of nutritious foods.

Agricultural programmes like the Food Security Pack (FSP) rolled out by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, provide an alternative to improve incomes for households that are identified as vulnerable but are not labour-constrained. The FNG found that FSPs promoting irrigated agriculture of diverse non-staple foods have the potential to generate more income for household than FSPs promoting rainfed production of staple foods. However, both models of FSP can contribute significantly to household access to nutritious diets.

School meals serve as an opportunity to provide learners with essential micronutrients that they may otherwise not consume.

School meals offer an incentive for school attendance. Data from the Rural Agricultural Livelihood Survey and

the World Bank show that provinces with lower per capita income have a lower percentage of school-going children and a higher dropout rate for adolescent girls.

Diverse, nutritious school meals can contribute significantly to covering micronutrient needs and reduce household cost in feeding school-age children and adolescents. The FNG found that the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Programme, led by the Ministry of General Education, has the potential to reduce the cost of a nutritious diet for a school-age child by more than 40 percent if it includes nutrient-dense foods such as leafy green vegetables, fish and milk.

Innovative approaches, such as hydroponic school gardening and the inclusion of biofortified foods in school meals, can also help improve their impact in closing nutrient gaps.

Recommendations from the FNG

Recommendations	Action	Stakeholder identified priority actions	Relevant stakeholders
Social Safety Nets			
Coverage of current social safety nets should be expanded, specifically scaling up Social Cash Transfers (SCT) to households with children under 2 and including support to produce fresh, nutritious foods in the Food Security Pack.	Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train community health personnel in demonstrating complementary feeding and home fortification to recipients of cash transfers. Train agricultural extension workers supporting producers on the Food Security Pack programme in nutrition sensitive agriculture. Provide extension workers with adequate resources (e.g., transport) to fulfil duties and reach smallholder farmers in remote areas. Promote integration of value-added mechanisation within training institutions. 	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Ministry of Science and Technology Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development Ministry of Health
	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate Ministry of Community Development and Social Services cash transfer activities with agricultural activities and extension services. Ensure that national registries for Social Cash Transfers capture the most nutritionally vulnerable groups, including those in Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) programming. 	National Food Nutrition Commission Ministry of Community Development Social Services Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Ministry of Science and Technology Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development Ministry of Health
	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote social and behaviour change on nutritious feeding practices for children with disabilities, considering specific needs and vulnerabilities. Mainstream nutrition topics into women's economic empowerment programmes such as savings and lending groups. Increase the value of the SCT to enable the cost of nutritious diet. Integrate targeting of households with children under 2 to receive the SCT. Promote implementation of adequate maternal leave for optimal lactating. Review the Food Security Pack to include vegetables seeds. 	Zambia Revenue Authority Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry

Recommendations	Action	Stakeholder identified priority actions	Relevant stakeholders
Home-grown School Feeding (HGSF)			
Increase funding to operationalize the Home-Grown School Feeding strategy. Funding should support expansion of the programme to include adolescent learners, production of nutritious crops, promotion of nutrition knowledge using the innovative and climate-smart nutrition gardens as teaching aids, and generation of farming revenues for school incomes.	Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate nutrition education guidance for school health and nutrition coordinators and production unit coordination. Enhance school production units to support implementation of the HGSF programme through capacity building for innovative techniques and climate-smart agriculture for nutritious crops. Train extension workers in engaging with learners and within the HGSF programme. Provide training on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, nutritious foods and good eating habits to schoolteachers, or integrate nutrition-sensitive programming in training institution curricula. Promote the use of wood lot for food preparation to ensure environmental sensitive within HGSF programmes 	Ministry of Education Ministry of Health Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development Private sector across the food system Ministry of Green Economy and Environment
	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure adequate funding for the HGSF programme. Coordinate linkages between extension services and schools with HGSF. Coordinate a technical working group between the national, provincial and district levels to ensure horizontal integration between the education, agriculture and health sectors. 	Ministry of Education Ministry of Finance and National Planning National Food and Nutrition Commission Ministry of Health
	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase funding to HGSF. Integrate and promote messaging that today's learners will be tomorrow's adults, therefore it is essential to ensure they are aware of how climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive agriculture can help improve their nutrition outcomes. Expand coverage and scope of diet for the HGSF programme to include adolescent learners. 	Ministry of Finance and National Planning Ministry of Health National Food and Nutrition Commission



Photo Credits

Photo page 1: WFP/Vincent Tremeau

Photo page 5: WFP/Vincent Tremeau

World Food Programme Zambia

Plot 10/4971 Tito Road, Rhodes Park

Lusaka

WFP.Lusaka@wfp.org

May 2023 | Zambia