

## ACT NOW BEFORE UKRAINE WAR PLUNGES MILLIONS INTO MALNUTRITION

*Standing Together for Nutrition (ST4N) Consortium G7 Policy Brief*  
 June 2022

Governments, donors, and funders must act now to protect current and future generations from the devastating effects of maternal and child malnutrition as *crisis upon crises* adversely impacts millions of vulnerable communities worldwide.

Global advocacy stakeholders, such as the [Hungry for Action](#) coalition, are calling for \$21.5 billion of flexible humanitarian funding to save lives now, which includes \$1.6 billion to reach 30 million of the most vulnerable mothers and children. In addition, they urge \$1.2 billion to scale up essential nutrition services and access to life-saving therapeutics via health systems. Additional resources are needed to ensure resilience through new financing to integrate nutrition in health, social protection and agricultural systems and accelerate food systems transformations to deliver on nutrition.

The war against Ukraine, as recently highlighted in a [Joint Statement](#) in the science journal *Nature*, threatens to increase the number of malnourished people who have already suffered from reduced diets and health systems support due to COVID-19.

The current crisis comes after two years of governments and households trying to cope with the shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has put them at an extraordinarily high level of vulnerability and likely exhausted their ability to cope or adapt.

### Five Urgent Actions in Joint Statement

- (1) Limit trade restrictions
- (2) Support with social protection programs
- (3) Increase funding for humanitarian assistance
- (4) Protect national nutrition budgets
- (5) Honor funding commitments

Record high food, fuel, and fertilizer prices **threaten to further increase the number of malnourished people globally, especially women and children, in three ways:**

1. directly impacting food security and quality of the diet through increased food prices and reduced food availability and access;
2. reducing the reach of humanitarian assistance and services for mitigating acute food insecurity and preventing and treating malnutrition; and
3. reallocating nutrition budgets to other priorities

Women are particularly vulnerable to the near and long-term impacts of these malnutrition crises – eating both last and least and with inequitable access to services and support. Furthermore, existing gender inequality and power imbalances — which are exacerbated during crises — mean that women have less agency to direct resources towards feeding themselves and their children<sup>1</sup>.



ST4N estimated that pandemic-related disruptions to economic, food, and health systems will increase the number of wasted children by 13.6 million, the number of stunted children by 3.6 million, and the number of women with maternal anemia by 4.8 million<sup>2</sup> by the end of 2022.

Tragically, **an entire cohort of children born into an era of crises** will suffer from both near-term impacts, including increased mortality and acute malnutrition, and life-long consequences resulting from poor physical growth and brain development with adverse consequences for future educational outcomes, productivity, and chronic disease risks later in life. These impacts unfortunately carry forward to subsequent generations and reduce the human capital and economic productivity of communities and nations.<sup>3</sup>



ST4N supports the global nutrition community in advocating for concrete actions at this year's G7 global dialogue to protect and nourish millions of mothers and children across LMIC contexts who face extraordinary challenges due to the current crisis in Ukraine, climate shocks, and two years of reduced access to critical nutrition services and nutrient rich diets.

## G7 LEADERS MUST ACT NOW TO PROTECT NUTRITION OF VULNERABLE MOTHERS & CHILDREN

The Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium **urges G7 leaders to address urgent nutrition needs targeting the most vulnerable populations, particularly mothers and children, and to commit new actions, building upon N4G commitments.**

ST4N calls on G7 leaders and advocacy stakeholders to:

1. *Make immediate investments to save lives* - by urgently scaling-up proven and cost-effective nutrition interventions and services delivered via health systems that target the most vulnerable populations, particularly mothers and young children
2. *Prevent a rise in all forms of malnutrition in the medium and longer-term* - by designing social protection programs to ensure that mothers and young children have improved access to nutritious foods and nutrition and health services
3. *Accelerate food systems transformation* - to ensure improved availability and affordability of nutritious foods, including rapid scale-up of food fortification.

### ----- Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium

Standing Together for Nutrition (ST4N) is a multidisciplinary consortium of nutrition, economics, gender, food, and health system experts working to address the scale and reach of COVID-related nutrition challenges. Their policy-relevant evidence have been published in leading journals such as The Lancet, Nature Food and Nature. ST4N is hosted by the Micronutrient Forum. For additional information, visit <https://www.standingtogetherfornutrition.org/>. Follow us on Twitter@ST4Nutrition.

<sup>1</sup> Marphatia, A. A. *et al.* (2016). Associations of gender inequality with child malnutrition and mortality across 96 countries. *Glob. Health, Epidemiol. and Genom.* 1, e6; doi: [10.1017/gheg.2016.1](https://doi.org/10.1017/gheg.2016.1)

<sup>2</sup> Osendarp, S. *et al.* The COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate maternal and child undernutrition and child mortality in low- and middle-income countries. *Nat. Food.* 2(7), 476-484 (2021); doi: [10.1038/s43016-021-00319-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00319-4)

<sup>3</sup> Martorell, R. Improved nutrition in the first 1000 days and adult human capital and health. *Am J Hum Biol.* 29(2), e22952 (2017); doi: [10.1002/ajhb.22952](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.22952)