

HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

A CHALLENGE TO CHILD WELLBEING



INTRODUCTION

Children have the right to **ENOUGH** nutritious food. Having **ENOUGH** nutritious food is critical for a young child's physical growth and brain development.

The largest global hunger crisis of modern history is unfolding before our eyes, with over 25 million children currently at risk of starvation and 149 million stunted due to the lack of nutritious food. Hunger and malnutrition place a question mark on children's right to life. They rob girls and boys of their potential and condemn them to a lifetime of poor health, the inability to get educated and increased exposure to violence – it is an intergenerational crisis.

Children in rural settings and poorer households, whose mothers received no formal education, are more vulnerable to stunting and wasting, while children in urban areas and wealthier households are at higher risk of being overweight. The world is not acting quickly enough to save millions of children who are on the brink of starvation. This is a systemic failure and it needs systemic solutions. Success will mean feeding the hungry today and avoiding relapses of child hunger and malnutrition crises in the future.

This paper outlines World Vision Ireland's policy position on addressing hunger and malnutrition. It is our response as a child-focused humanitarian, development and advocacy agency, and sets out our recommendations for increased action to respond to the global hunger crisis and support the world's most vulnerable children, families and communities.





OUR POSITION

Child hunger and malnutrition are universal and unacceptable. A life of plenty for every child is possible, yet every day more children go hungry. ENOUGH of the right food and nutrition is still not reaching the children who need it. Every child deserves the food they need to develop a healthy body and mind. Every family deserves to be able to put ENOUGH of the right food on the table.

The number of children dying from hunger has declined every decade since the 1980s. Now it's back on the rise with spiralling food costs. Children are bearing the brunt of an unequal food system disrupted by conflicts and climate change. We take issue with a food system in our modern world that leaves children without the right nutrition. That means parents queuing for food support, everywhere from rural Ethiopia to urban Sydney. Unable to provide for their children, parents face impossible choices.

We know that there is ENOUGH in this world for every child, no matter where they live or the crises they face, to have the nourishing food they need to thrive and for families to be more resilient. Children should know about their right to healthy food, be able to ask for it and get ENOUGH of it to nourish them. Article 24 of the UN Rights of the Child clearly states the fundamental need for children to be well-nourished. It applies to every child, no matter where they live or their circumstances.

At World Vision Ireland, two of our key aims are: for children to be better fed, nourished and resilient; and to have hungry and malnourished girls and boys to be more visible, heard and prioritised in policy and funding. We work closely with all stakeholders to ensure child nutrition sensitive approaches are embedded in policies, funding and regulations affecting all hunger and nutrition related goods, programmes and services to begin to stem the series of crises.





KEY DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS UNDERPINNING OUR POSITION

A number of key international hunger, nutrition and development frameworks, policy instruments and strategies are inextricably linked and fundamental to tackling the hunger crisis and ensuring children's rights are delivered to the highest attainable standard of health.

Paris Climate Agreement

The Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was agreed at COP 21 in 2015. Adopted by 195 parties, it is a legally binding agreement whose principal aim is to collectively hold the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels while aiming to limit it to 1.5°C.

The Paris Agreement is the primary international agreement which creates financial pathways for countries to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, foster climate resilience and encourage the development of low greenhouse gas emissions.

Ireland is a strong proponent of the Paris Agreement and submits its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as part of the EU submission. As part of the EU, Ireland is committed to a binding target of an at least 55% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. While significant progress has been made in respect of these targets, Ireland is still a long way short of achieving them.

UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a roadmap for creating a better world of which Ireland is a committed signatory, having cofacilitated the negotiations in 2015.

Goal 2 is about creating a world free of hunger by 2030. The action to combat hunger is a specific priority in the Sustainable Development Goals and is intrinsically linked to the achievement of all 16 other goals. Goal 2 prioritises key issues such as social protection, safeguarding safe and nutritious food especially for children and transforming food systems to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable world.

By 2030, Goal 2 targets: the ending of hunger; ensuring everyone has access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round; ending all forms of malnutrition, specifically under 5 stunting and wasting; doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, with a focus on women and indigenous farmers; ensuring sustainable food production systems and implementing resilient agricultural practices; amongst others.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is seen a milestone and a benchmark against which other international agreements can be made. As the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history, it is the pillar upon which World Vision bases our work and direction.

It was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 and sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled, as well as the societal and governmental obligations to ensuring children's rights are upheld.

UN Decade of Action on Nutrition

The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition is a ten-year window, from 2016-2025, where stakeholders around the world are aiming to accelerate and implement policies, programmes and investments designed to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, leaving no one behind.

This is an accelerated, ten-year push to achieve SDG 2 – Zero Hunger and SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being. It encourages governments and stakeholders to develop inclusive policies and collaboratively implement programmes aimed at ending all forms of malnutrition. It sets out a framework for stakeholders to align actions across sectors and consolidate their resources towards hunger eradication.

Climate Action Plan 2023

Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2023 is a significant document which incorporates carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap towards halving Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050. It reflects Ireland's international and legally binding commitments, such as in the Paris Agreement and sets out key actions required to respond to the climate crisis.

The Climate Action Plan 2023 comes at a crucial time for climate change, for the SDGs and for the Paris Agreement as considerable milestones are approaching. It suggests a range of climate solutions which both aim to tackle the climate crisis and also leverage the advantages of a green transition for Ireland's social and economic development.

HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION A GLOBAL PROBLEM

As climate change, conflict and inflation continue to increase, so too does the humanitarian need. These compounding factors have resulted in the largest global hunger crisis in modern history and are having devastating impacts on children's health around the world. Currently, over 25 million children are at risk of starvation and 149 million are stunted, in large part due to the lack of nutritious food. The lifelong impact this has on a child's health can rob them of their happiness, their potential, their education and too often, their life.

We are seeing a global rise in the number of those facing hunger for the first time since World War 2 and there is now demonstrable evidence that the world is moving away from the Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030.

Hunger rates began to increase again in 2015, the same year the governments of the world agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals and SDG2: Zero Hunger. In 2021, six years after the signing of the SDGs:

148.1 million children

under 5 years of age were stunted, 45 million were wasted, 13.7 million were severely wasted and 37 million were overweight.

Almost half of the 345 million



people facing acute hunger were estimated to be children.

75%

of children under 2 don't eat

a minimally diverse diet and 50% don't eat with enough frequency per day.

Children in wealthy countries who live in poor communities also face these issues.

Only 20%

of the children

who require life-saving treatment for wasting currently receive it, leading to the deaths of one million children annually.

The actions, or more often, the inactions of the global community have placed us at this tipping point, where rhetoric and international agreements are still outweighed by generations of rapid economic expansion. Where enough food is produced to feed the world but modern food systems are failing to address the intergenerational cycle of hunger in many of the most fragile societies in the world.

The great injustice of having enough food but having a system which marginalises and condemns billions to hunger and malnutrition is multiplied by the impacts of climate change. Over 800 million people are suffering from chronic hunger, a number which has to be brought down to zero in the next six years if SDG 2 is to be achieved.

While there is agreement that the levels of child hunger are unacceptable, there are issues with current approaches and practices in relation to measuring child hunger. The numbers of hungry and malnourished children are mostly estimated. There is evidence to suggest that our current estimates may exclude certain sub-populations of children, such as primary school age children. Without comprehensive tracking and reporting, accountability for ending child hunger and malnutrition is impossible. More comprehensive statistics would greatly assist global and national food-related policy and funding commitments to develop more child-sensitive indicators and approaches for nutrition, hunger, gender and protection.

In World Vision Ireland, hunger and malnutrition are at the heart of our humanitarian and development programming. Alongside our governmental and multilateral partners, we work at the forefront of hunger and malnutrition, in the attempt to save and transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in the world.





DRIVERS OF HUNGER

The world experienced unprecedented success in the lowering or reversal of key indicators such as child stunting, wasting and malnutrition, child and maternal mortality, and literacy and educational attainment. But, since 2015, we have seen a reverse in a number of these categories, principally on the issue of child hunger. There is a complex and compounding network of factors which are driving hunger, these include climate change, extreme poverty, broken food systems, gender inequality and conflict.

Each of these alone contributes enormously towards the rise in number of those facing hunger, but the compounding and interlinked nature of these factors is where the true damage is happening. In addition, Covid-19 dramatically set back people's lives as social networks, social support structures, government initiatives and NGO programmes were forced to dramatically scale back their work causing a lasting impact on hunger and malnutrition.



Climate Change

The tipping point has come and gone as, for the first time, the world moved past 1.5°C warming above pre-industrial levels. Despite decades of campaigning, international agreements, sanctions, government campaigns and global protests, the effects of climate change have continued to get worse and impact millions, if not billions, of people around the world. Climate change is the greatest threat to the people we work with who live in the most vulnerable communities and societies.

Children have contributed least to climate change but face the greatest impacts. They live in some of the most extreme environments in the world and are least able to adapt to climate changes. Refugees, internally displaced families and their children are at the frontlines of the climate change emergency in developing countries. Many of them are located in what is known as “climate hotspots” where very limited resources are available to help them adapt to increasingly harsh environments.

World Vision Ireland's priority is the lives and livelihoods of children and we know that children pay a disproportionately high price for climate change. It threatens their right to food, their right to education, their right to good health and, all too often, their right to life.

Extreme weather events and climate shocks can cause water shortages and impact food supplies and sanitation, driving disease, under-nutrition and under-development, making initiatives that help vulnerable communities build their resilience to climate shocks vital. This includes training on improved agricultural techniques, support for families to diversify their income sources and help for communities to implement farmer managed natural regeneration programmes, where local forests are cultivated to improve the local environment and provide sustainable income sources such as beekeeping.

Climate change is exacerbating water scarcity, reducing agricultural productivity and increasing the frequency and severity of heatwaves, while also driving drought, dust storms and desertification. Regions that had consistent and predictable rainy seasons which communities depended on have gone into flux as years of drought and missed rainy seasons can be followed by devastating floods. El Niño like weather patterns have developed across much of Africa over the past decade, playing havoc with agriculture and family livelihoods.

The gruelling effects of climate-change induced droughts are pushing communities into poverty and putting the lives and well-being of millions of children and families at risk. The impacts are widespread and intense. Families continue to face perpetual hunger and their futures become deeply uncertain. This disproportionately affects children due to the ravishing impacts of malnutrition that impedes their optimal development and health.

Climate change is driving people out of their homes. In the Middle East, close to 39% of internal displacements in 2022 were triggered by disasters – such as floods and droughts, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center's 2023 report. According to UNICEF, children in the Middle East region are at increasing risk, with at least 103 million children and 53.5 million adolescents expected to become greatly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change by 2050.

Conflict

Where climate change is indirect, enveloping and impersonal, conflict is the opposite. Conflict is one of the fundamental drivers of hunger around the world and, according to the World Food Programme (WFP), it is the principal cause of hunger in 19 countries and places 117 million people in 'crisis' or worse levels of hunger in these locations.

Hunger is one of the primary effects of conflict and zero hunger cannot be achieved without stability. However, the Geneva Academy of International Law suggests that there are over 110 armed conflicts ongoing, with over 35 non-international conflicts in Africa alone. These are taking place in some of the most fragile and at-risk countries that we work in including South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the scale of humanitarian need is immense.

The impacts of conflict on hunger are both immediate and protracted. In the short term, conflict often destroys agriculture. This has been seen throughout history, where crops and harvests are destroyed, where grain stored for winter is destroyed and where livestock are killed. This plunges families who may have been living on a very tight budget into deep food insecurity.

Longer term, conflict forces displacement, as is particularly evident now in Sudan where 6.6 million people have been forcibly displaced. It pushes families into abandoning their homes and their farms and, in desperation, finding other areas to live in safety. Their food insecurity travels with them and food insecurity can develop in other regions which now have to deal with a large influx of IDPs/refugees.

Displaced people are far more vulnerable to hunger and undernutrition. This disproportionately affects children who are the first to suffer from malnutrition and present with signs of stunting and wasting. The lack of food and the poor diet that children and vulnerable people are exposed to can have enormous physical and intellectual implications that last a lifetime.

While food insecurity is rarely the sole cause of violence, it can have a multiplier effect. Food insecurity can be viewed as a political failure, especially in times of high inflation with soaring prices for basic items and it can result in people questioning a government's legitimacy.

People are extraordinarily resilient, but food insecurity is often the straw that breaks the camel's back for even the most resilient. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) suggest that food insecurity can be the final point upon which "societies ... cleave along preestablished lines over perceived or real inequalities or discrimination".

Hunger is both a cause and a result of conflict. Conflict breeds hunger and hunger breeds conflict. Together they destroy livelihoods, disrupt markets and break down the fabric of society. Hunger will never be eliminated without peace and, without peace, generations of children will go on to suffer the extreme, life threatening impacts of hunger.

Extreme Poverty

According to the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations, an estimated 670 million people, or 8.4 per cent of the global population, continue to live in extreme poverty, while up to 783 million, or 9.2 per cent of the population, are currently experiencing hunger. These two figures are inextricably linked and, for the first time in decades, extreme poverty is on the rise.

Extreme poverty is a systemic, protracted and often intergenerational issue. According to a UN report FAO on achieving sustainable agrifood systems and eradicating rural poverty, more than 80 per cent of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas. Extreme poverty is one of the most direct causes of hunger and one of the most debilitating conditions a person, family or society can suffer from.

The SDGs place the eradication of poverty at the very top, in Goal 1, because it is a problem which underpins all others. The UN measures extreme poverty as those who live on less than \$1.25 per day. Goal 1 prioritises establishing social protection systems for the most vulnerable, ensuring equal access to economic resources, building resilience to climate shocks and extreme events and enhancing resources to allow developing countries to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.

Inflation, food prices, poverty and hunger are all inextricably linked, compounding one another. Today, we see inflation as one of the key drivers of hunger as families are no longer able to afford even basic food items.

Hunger is one of the most critical and direct manifestations of poverty. According to WFP nearly 258 million people across 58 countries experienced crisis-level food insecurity or worse in 2022.

A rise in poverty and hunger levels has huge knock-on impacts across a community, including the increase in child marriages, in child labour, in school attendance and in violence. This is evident in many of World Vision Ireland's programmes where we see first-hand how inflation and the rise in food costs forces families to keep their children from school and into work or in the case of girls, into early marriage in order to have money for food.

Extreme poverty degrades and robs the lives of millions every year. Overcoming poverty gives people opportunity, purpose, respect and dignity. It is a fundamental hurdle we must overcome if we are to end hunger.

Gender Inequality

Women and children, particularly girls, are disproportionately affected by the vulnerabilities and protection risks that arise from hunger, food insecurity and prolonged deprivations. Even though countless vulnerable children, in both high-income and low-income countries, face a daily reality of poverty, exploitation, violence, neglect and abuse, girls in particular face many disadvantages that reinforce and reflect gender-based discrimination as a result.

Malnutrition is a growing gender inequality issue. As hunger sets in, families are often forced to make decisions that have lasting harmful consequences for girls and boys in order to survive. The vulnerabilities and protection risks that arise from the unimaginable choices many families are forced to make due to hunger are inextricably intertwined with gender – including the adoption of harmful coping mechanisms and increased exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation.

Women and girls make up 60% of those who suffer chronic hunger. The idea of women eating 'last and least' is prevalent around the world as status within homes and societies often places men and boys higher. This comes at odds with the fact that women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia make up 60% of the agricultural workforces. Here again we see the inequality of gender roles, where women and girls do the large majority of agricultural labour, but men are either the landowners or are in charge of family finances.

The scale of female hunger is staggering as, according to UNICEF, over a billion adolescent girls and women suffer from undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and/or anaemia. It is extremely challenging for adolescent girls and women to access the diets, services and care they need for good nutrition. In societies where gender discrimination is a norm, poverty, conflict, extreme weather and inflation often combine to impact women and girls first.



Food Systems and Policies are Broken and Unjust

Food systems produce and deliver the food all of us eat and provide the main livelihoods source for most poor rural people in the world. Despite their importance, most food systems globally are broken and fail to deliver for people and the planet. The current practices are an inefficient and harmful means of distributing sufficient nutritious food to people across the world.

On one hand, hundreds of millions suffer from malnutrition, undernutrition and/or are overweight, and on the other hand, around 13 percent of food produced is lost between harvest and retail and an estimated 17 percent of total global food production is wasted in households, in the food service and in retail. The current food systems are also one of the main contributors to climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. 30% of total global greenhouse gases can be attributed to food systems and are rapidly depleting the planetary resources that are supposed to nourish future generations of children.

To make things worse, supply chains for the food and beverages industry, particularly in the agricultural sector, continue to employ millions of child labourers, keep smallholder farmers and their families in poverty due to unfair market systems and force them into negative coping strategies. Recent global challenges such as inflation and conflict have exacerbated existing global food and nutrition issues and pose significant challenges for the realisation of children's rights.

Governments, civil society organisation and civilians around the world who are trying to overhaul the food systems structure are met by strong lobbying interests which continue to entrench the unfair and unjust system that is in place. It is essential that we continue to support and encourage resilient local and regional markets which reduces carbon impacts, promotes biodiversity and protects the livelihoods of producers. It is vital that this approach takes place in the global north and in the south to create virtuous circles.

To create a fair and just food system that delivers on the SDGs and delivers for the most vulnerable, it is essential that changes are made to food systems in the Global North and Global South alike. Changes in consumption, trade and production are as necessary in Ireland as they are in Malawi or Myanmar to achieve a reliable, nutritious and ample food supply without the environmental damage.

Agriculture is a sector which may need the greatest levels of reform if we are to come even close to achieving the SDGs. Issues like overfishing, deforestation, soil erosion and degradation, livestock GHG emissions, food waste and use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers are all a direct result of a food systems approach which prioritises income generation above all else.

Ireland is strongly committed to reducing hunger and malnutrition through sustainable food systems' transformation and actively participated in the UN Food Systems and the Nutrition for Growth Summits in 2021, which aimed at mobilising resources and supporting coordinated, effective responses.

IRELAND GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS AND HUNGER

Ireland sees itself as a global leader on food and nutrition security and one who champions global efforts to reduce hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. Ireland was a co-facilitator of the SDGs, has deep expertise in the delivery of food and reducing food security and has always prioritised the hunger crisis in humanitarian and development contexts.

The Irish Government is an important partner to WFP and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), providing un-earmarked, flexible funding. Ireland also manages an Africa Agri-food Development Programme, which leverages Irish private sector agricultural expertise to help develop nascent African companies through joint ventures.



Recently, Ireland has made significant pledges and contributions to achieving Zero Hunger by:

Pledging an additional €850 million for nutrition by 2026, with an emphasis on addressing wasting (acute malnutrition) among children under five;

Increasing funding to the International Fund for Agricultural Development by 67% in 2022;

Acting as UN Security Council informal co-focal point for conflict and hunger, alongside Niger;

Co-chairing the Group of Friends of Action on Conflict and Hunger with Ecuador.



A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development

Ireland's international development and humanitarian assistance policy prioritises four key areas: gender equality, reducing humanitarian need; climate action; and strengthening governance. The overarching ambition is to reach the furthest behind first.

Irish Aid and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs is a key partner of World Vision Ireland and together, we work in some of the world's most fragile contexts, delivering lifesaving and transformative assistance. A Better World is the key document in Ireland on international development, setting out targets and objectives underpinning the efforts of the Irish Government and the INGO sector.

In A Better World, the Irish Government commits to strengthen its integrated resilience approach to work on hunger and nutrition in development and humanitarian settings, scaling up its support to nutritional interventions. It strongly commits to achieving SDG 2: Zero Hunger and recognises the interdependence of it and SDG 1: No Poverty and SDG 13: Climate Action. The Irish Government also commits to addressing the sustainability of food systems in order to tackle hunger and malnutrition.



Food Vision 2030

Food Vision 2030 is Ireland's ten-year strategy to position the country as a world leader in Sustainable Food Systems. The ambition of this strategy is to integrate a food systems approach across our agri-food sector and to focus on innovation for sustainable food and agriculture systems, producing safe, nutritious and high-value food, and transitioning to a more environmentally responsible and friendly means of food production.

This ambitious strategy requires strong stakeholder involvement from major food companies, local farmers, civil society organisations and academia to deliver on the major commitments of improving water quality, reducing emissions, restoring biodiversity and making Ireland an international leader within the climate and food policy space.



UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action

In Dubai, Ireland and 158 other countries signed the Emirates Declaration, signalling their intent to put food at core of their climate action plans and to urgently reduce the environmental impact of food systems. By signing, they are recommitting themselves to halting climate change to the 1.5°C Paris Agreement target and to establish more sustainable agriculture and food systems which align to this objective.

The Emirates Declaration is wide ranging but focuses on addressing the specific needs of the most-affected groups, which includes smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities, with particular emphasis given to women and children. It prioritises helping these groups mitigate against and adapt to climate change by introducing climate sensitive strategies and technologies.



OUR APPROACH TO ADDRESSING HUNGER

Across our programming, World Vision Ireland takes a diverse range of approaches to addressing hunger. We prioritise locally led, context specific and appropriate solutions. Listening to communities, especially children, and putting their experience and expertise to the forefront of programming is vital to ensuring that our support is child-focussed, locally led and relevant to each specific context. Across our humanitarian and development work, hunger is addressed through the following approaches:



Provision of food



Improving livelihoods



Increasing resilience

Provision of Food

In our humanitarian programming, General Food Distributions and Supplementary Feeding Programmes improve the food security of those impacted by emergencies, conflicts and acute hunger while Therapeutic Feeding and Inpatient Care save the lives of acutely malnourished children and pregnant/breastfeeding women. We work closely with the World Food Programme and other partners to provide this lifesaving assistance and to help meet the immediate needs of affected people. We also use food interventions such as food for work/assets to protect and facilitate recovery of livelihoods for disaster affected populations.

Cash and voucher assistance is a key method to help people meet their basic needs in emergency settings. World Vision uses cash and vouchers widely as this approach enhances the dignity of people who are living in extreme situations, providing them with choice, control and flexibility. When wider factors are taken into consideration, it can be an effective tool to help generate resilience in the local community and provide a stimulus to local suppliers and the local economy.

Improving Livelihoods

Our livelihoods programmes take a broader approach to improving the lives of children and reducing hunger by empowering and building the capacity of the family and societal structures that children live in. We do this through innovative and evidence-based project models and approaches.



Core, proven approaches and innovations include:

Capacity building with Good Agricultural Practice and Climate Smart Agriculture; introduction of household gardens including keyhole gardens which use household waste water to produce nutritious vegetables for families; promotion of drought resistant crops, environmentally appropriate pest management and the protection of crops from animal trespass.

Local Value Chain Development (LVCD) is a model which enables small producers to generate sustainable income that allows them to provide for the food and other needs of their families. Profitability is increased for producers through better engagement with markets and by building relationships with critical service providers that can help them overcome market barriers. The model has four key components: ensuring participatory market analysis; forming collective producer groups; empowering and training producers; and facilitating links to market actors and service providers

'Savings For Transformation (S4T)' supports community groups (especially women's groups) to establish and run member-owned savings groups. Participants gain knowledge and understanding about the benefits of regular saving and with their savings can plan ahead, cope with emergencies and invest in their children's health and education. As they accumulate savings, different members can invest in small businesses such as community shops, tailoring, crafts and vegetable gardens.

'Nurturing Care Groups (NCGs)' support household level health and nutrition practices. A Nurturing Care Group is typically a group of 10 to 15 community-based volunteer behaviour change agents who meet every two weeks with project staff or government Community Health Workers (CHWs) for training, and then cascade down behaviour change messages and activities to caregiver groups at the neighbourhood level. They also build social support and cohesion among members and help link neighbourhoods with community leaders, faith leaders and government services/staff (e.g. clinics, social workers). While the NCGs primarily contribute to improved health and nutrition, they can have a positive impact on food security and livelihoods through the encouragement of backyard gardening which provides nutritious vegetables for consumption and sale.

Increasing Resilience

Extreme climate events such as floods or droughts greatly threaten livelihoods, food security and household and community assets. In addition to supporting households and communities to increase their resilience through climate smart and nutrition sensitive livelihoods approaches, World Vision Ireland also supports them to reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related events as well as economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. We partner with communities to strengthen their disaster risk reduction and management strategies with appropriate climate mitigation and adaptation activities.

Community-based Disaster Preparedness and Management committees are trained and supported in developing plans which identify and mitigate risks and in actions to improve local response (for example to a flood that threatens crops) through early warning systems and information dissemination.

Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) is a proven innovation employed by World Vision in partnership with rural communities. It is a low-cost land restoration technique that combats poverty and hunger amongst poor farmers by restoring and improving agricultural, forested and pasture lands. FMNR is based on encouraging the systematic re-growth of existing trees or self-sown seeds which helps to restore soil structure and fertility, inhibit erosion and soil moisture evaporation, rehabilitate springs and the water table, increase biodiversity and ultimately, combat the impacts of climate change at the local level.

Countries have pledged to: enhance water management in agriculture; protect and restore soils and ecosystem; reduce food loss and waste; promote sustainable aquaculture; encourage changes in consumption (particularly in the Global North); and ensure and improve access to nutrition (particularly in the Global South) amongst others.

This collective pledge aims to urgently reduce the environmental impact of food systems around the world and improve their climate resilience in order to ensure food security and to help those most vulnerable to climate change. The signatories have committed to incorporating food systems into their next round of National Determined Contributions and present their progress at COP 29 in Baku.



CASE STUDY – ALOZA'S STORY

In Uganda, 19-year-old Aloza runs a tailoring business. She is also a new mum. With her business, she earns enough to provide for herself and her baby while still managing to save a little each day.

But it wasn't always like this. When Aloza became pregnant at 17, it felt like her world was ending. School, for many girls in Uganda, is more than just an education. It provides a layer of protection and nutrition that some don't get at home. Through school feeding programmes, children are ensured to get one nutritious meal a day, which is a beacon of hope in face of the growing hunger crisis amid rising costs.

With no support, and the stigma of pregnancy following her, Aloza was forced to drop out of school. She was isolated, without any work experience, finding it harder and harder to find enough to eat. But when food prices shot up again, she found herself unable to feed herself. She quickly became malnourished, at a time when her body needed nutrients the most.

World Vision's impact:

Just in time, Aloza met a World Vision health worker who showed Aloza how to access the vital prenatal services she needed to monitor both her and the baby's health.

Once healthy, Aloza enrolled herself in a World Vision women's saving group – funded by sponsors – where she learned how to tailor clothes and other financial literacy skills. From there she was able to set up her business and save for the arrival of her new baby. These few steps were enough to change the trajectory of Aloza and her baby's life. It helped Aloza take back her future and the future of the next generation.

The benefits of the savings group weren't just financial either. Aloza quickly discovered that this group of women became a safe space to express herself. At meetings they would discuss issues that affect women like gender-based violence and child protection. For Aloza, the new journey of motherhood became less daunting with a support network of courageous women standing behind her.

Fast forward a year to now, and Aloza is a proud mum to a baby boy, who is healthy and thriving despite the growing hunger crisis that surrounds him.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Invest in nutrition sensitive, climate smart livelihoods and build resilience

Strengthening livelihoods and building resilience in individuals, families and communities against the impacts of conflict and climate change must be a priority. Doing so builds people's capacity to work together, maximise their resources, educate themselves and develop their own skills to look after and build better lives for one another.

We prioritise methods which address multiple issues simultaneously, such as small-holder female farmers which empower women, addresses household poverty, tackles child malnutrition and obesity, amongst others. These have been extremely effective as they are climate smart and nutrition focused, they foster gender equality, bring increased finances to families and directly benefit children through increase food production and a nutritionally rich and diverse diet. Similarly with climate smart agriculture practices which are being constantly developed around the world and greening communities, we empower people to use best practice and innovative tools and then apply them locally, with local expertise and to solve local problems.

Multilateral commitments

The World Food Programme is critically underfunded despite its unique and lifesaving assistance in the world's most extreme and fragile contexts. We recommend that governments continue to meet and improve upon their commitments to WFP so that they can reach those populations that are in a state of extreme food crisis - IPC phase 3 or above. WFP is uniquely placed to reach people with food in a substantial way and they, and organisations like World Vision, are being forced to make life altering decisions on where they can and cannot deliver food and to what crisis they can and cannot respond. It is essential that governments continue to ensure that funding to organisations like the WFP are ringfenced and are committed on a multi-annual basis.

More children consume ENOUGH nutritional food provided ethically, sustainably and as locally as possible

As children grow, a diverse, nutritious diet helps protect them from common illnesses and is a foundation for their physical development; it is critical to brain development, providing them with the fuel to learn. This is reflected in Article 24 of the UN Rights of the Child which states the fundamental need for children to be well-nourished. It applies to every child, no matter where they live or their circumstances and states that children should have an adequate amount of nutritious food, live in a safe environment including access to clean water and that their caregivers should be educated on their children's nutrition and optimum feeding practices.

One of the best methods to achieving this is through the provision of school meals which have become the world's most extensive safety net and present a powerful opportunity to transform the lives of children affected by the food crisis. The provision of school meals has a disproportionate impact on the reduction of child marriage and child labour, increased school attendance, wider job creation, as well as an enormous impact on hunger related metrics.

However, when providing children with nutritious food and battling against malnutrition, it is vital that the food they are given is produced in a climate smart, nutrition sensitive manner and where possible, sourced locally and sustainably, supporting local smallholder farmers.

Children are visible and heard in hunger, nutrition and food security related policies at all levels.

Children are agents of change. They are both the current and future of the planet and their opinions are essential to creating systems which address all our concerns. It is essential that children are listened to, that they are counted and that their participation is meaningful. Children must be given the chance to play a central role in influencing decisions that directly affect them.

It is vital that governments and organisations develop and enhance appropriate channels to ensure that policy and decision-making meaningfully reflects diverse children's voices. We have seen the transformative impacts that children have made and it is essential that this is fostered, encouraged and replicated across policy areas. This is increasingly evident in the area of hunger, nutrition and food security, where the direct and indirect impacts on children's lives, livelihoods and futures are so profound.

For children to be visible, it is essential that we understand the size, dynamics and specifics of child hunger and nutrition at all levels. It is important for governments and decision makers to include measurements and indicators of child hunger in key global and national assessments and surveys.

Nutrition policies and services

It is important that nutrition policies and services take a child focused, nutrition sensitive, locally led and climate smart approach such as working with and supporting a qualified Community Health Workforce. Community Health Workers (CHWs) can have a powerful influence within a community, providing nutrition expertise, information on pregnancy, helping to monitor children at-risk in the community, informing and education community leaders and can be a focal point for communities to help them maximise their resources and be healthy.

We encourage the development of gender-transformative, cross-sector policies. Policies which increase child and family access to quality comprehensive preventive and curative nutrition services should be prioritised. This can be done through national health systems who ensure that health care facilities are equipped to identify and treat malnutrition and the training of health care workers, providing necessary medical supplies and implementing clear protocols. Integrating CHWs across Essential Nutrition Action service delivery is also key; CHWs should be given sufficient coverage and access so as they can reach the most vulnerable populations.

In order to build sustainable and climate-smart livelihoods, World Vision promotes sustainable natural resource management, complemented by climate-smart agricultural approaches and the development of inclusive market systems to strengthen sustainable agricultural production and market access. Government policies which aim to increase financial inclusion, improve and increase access to markets and facilitate training on climate smart agriculture, including agroforestry, conservation agriculture, water harvesting, crop diversification, climate information services and erosion control techniques, will improve farmers' resilience to climate change and increase farm productivity.

Food Systems

The global food system is fractured, ineffective and extremely damaging to the environment. Hundreds of millions of people are under fed and even more are overweight. Nutrition is often forgotten or, at best, an after thought and this is having lifelong impacts on children around the world. The current food system is one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions and one of the greatest threats to the long-term viability of our planet.

However, between Food Vision 2030, Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2023 and the UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action, Ireland has a strong agenda for transforming food production and food systems domestically and becoming a leader internationally.

These three key plans prioritise issues like: promoting fair trade; encouraging local and regional markets; supporting small scale producers; improving policy coherence domestically and in international fora; and maintaining an environmental focus. If implemented as designed and with conviction, Ireland will become a global leader in the hunger/climate policy space and can help transform food systems internationally.

Take action on climate change at home and abroad

Climate change is changing the world at a faster pace than many thought possible. It has become a multiplier in crises, a driver of forced migration, a new source of conflict and is having a devastating impact on the lives of vulnerable people around the world. As discussed above, climate change is forcing the world to rapidly rethink how we source, produce, distribute and eat food and, unless we increase our resilience and adapt, it could be the trigger that see the current hunger crisis could spiralling out of control.

It is pivotal that governments around the world take more dramatic action on climate change, both domestically and internationally. That they begin and rapidly speed up their implementation of national and international climate agreements and strive to meet the fundamental targets set out in the Paris Agreement, in the Sustainable Development Goals and at consecutive COPs.



CONCLUSION

In a world of plenty, too many do not have ENOUGH. Too often, the most vulnerable are left without a voice, without anyone to represent them and face the greatest risks. Women, children, indigenous people, the elderly, the disabled and so many others lack the structures and societal frameworks which would allow them to express their concerns, offer their opinions and to stand up for themselves. This is an ever-present challenge on the issue of hunger. There is ENOUGH nutritious food for all, but an unjust, unsustainable, climate threatening system means that billions of people are hungry, malnourished, obese or face food insecurity.

At World Vision Ireland, we prioritise giving children a voice, amplifying their positions and building capacity in them so that they can speak up at community, local, regional, national and international levels. We want to break the perpetual cycle that has seen generations of poverty, malnutrition, hunger and violence.

Hunger is one of the greatest challenges we face. Despite decades of improvement, international commitments and obligations, billions and billions of investments, improvements in technology and breakthrough innovations, we are losing ground in the race to end hunger and safe lives.

On a daily basis, we see the improvements made to people’s lives across our programmes. We see the transformative impacts of our livelihoods approach to hunger, the live-saving effects of emergency assistance and the increased levels of resilience and knowledge in the communities we work with.

Our approach, using local solutions and local expertise to deal with local problems empowers communities to combat international challenges, such as climate change and conflict, at the local level.

But the people who are at the greatest risk and who suffer the most from hunger, climate change and conflict are those who are least responsible for its causes and are often the least resilient to it. We continue to support them, advocate on their behalf, empower them to speak for themselves and to improve their lives. We implore the Irish Government and governments around the world to do the same and work towards ending global hunger in all its forms.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Hunger:

an uncomfortable or painful sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. It is used as synonymous with chronic undernourishment.

Malnutrition:

refers to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. Includes 3 broad groups of conditions:



undernutrition, which specifically for children includes wasting (low weight-for-height), stunting (low height-for-age) and underweight (low weight-for-age).



micronutrient-related malnutrition, which includes micronutrient deficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals) or micronutrient excess; and



Overweight (high weight-for-height), obesity (a severe form of overweight) and diet-related non-communicable diseases (e.g., diabetes). Measurements are adapted to the child's age.

Acute food insecurity:

food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time and of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration.

Famine:

an extreme deprivation of food. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition are or will likely be evident. A Famine classification is the highest phase (5) of the IPC Acute Food Insecurity scale (see below) and is attributed when an area has at least 20% of households facing an extreme lack of food, at least 30% of children suffering from acute malnutrition, and two people for every 10,000 dying each day due to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease.

Food security:

A situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Based on this definition, four food security dimensions can be identified: food availability, economic and physical access to food, food utilization and stability over time. The concept of food security is evolving to recognize the centrality of agency and sustainability.

Food systems:

encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded. The food system is composed of sub-systems (e.g., farming system, waste management system, input supply system, etc.) and interacts with other key systems (e.g., energy system, trade system, health system, etc.).

A sustainable food system is one that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.





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