

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 14 June 2021 07:00 GMT -04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	The Double-Burden of Malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa: Engaging Youth in Access to Nutritious Food
CONVENED BY	NCD Child
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/10133/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	No borders

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

1	0-18	23	19-30	27	31-50	4	51-65	1	66-80		80+
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PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

20	Male	36	Female		Prefer not to say or Other
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NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

3	Agriculture/crops	4	Education	28	Health care
	Fish and aquaculture	1	Communication	13	Nutrition
	Livestock		Food processing		National or local government
	Agro-forestry		Food retail, markets		Utilities
	Environment and ecology		Food industry		Industrial
	Trade and commerce	1	Financial Services	6	Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

5	Small/medium enterprise/artisan		Workers and trade union
	Large national business		Member of Parliament
1	Multi-national corporation		Local authority
	Small-scale farmer	3	Government and national institution
	Medium-scale farmer		Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer		United Nations
21	Local Non-Governmental Organization		International financial institution
13	International Non-Governmental Organization	1	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
	Indigenous People		Consumer group
10	Science and academia	2	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

The purpose of organizing the Dialogue was to act with urgency towards sustained and meaningful action targeting the double-burden of malnutrition. NCD Child, the organization that convened this Independent Dialogue, decided to commit to the Summit, to empower stakeholders from the sub-Saharan Africa region to amplify their voices and work together on a global platform. NCD Child identified two local co-convenors from the sub-Saharan Africa region, the South Africa NCD Alliance and the Ghana NCD Alliance, through an NCD Child Governing Council member living and working in the region. The co-convenors then facilitated introductions to potential speakers, participants, and facilitators. This invitation strategy helped to achieve an inclusive and multi-stakeholder event, with representation across different countries and groups. The keynote speaker and plenary panelists also spoke to diverse issues under the Dialogue theme, to encourage participants to approach the topics in the breakout sessions from different angles. NCD Child hosted a number of training sessions for facilitators in advance of the Dialogue, to ensure that each of the principles of the summit would be incorporated and reinforced during the breakout room discussions. In particular, these trainings emphasized the following principles: to be respectful, recognize complexity, embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity, complement the work of others and build trust. The following actions were encouraged to promote these principles: allocating sufficient time for each stakeholder to introduce themselves, gently inviting quieter stakeholders into the conversation to prevent 1-2 voices from dominating the discussions, and allowing participants to engage in various ways (such as verbally or written). The Dialogue was hosted over 2 days to enhance the trust that was formed among participants. To ensure the workshop was inclusive of French-speaking participants, French language interpretation was offered during the plenary sessions, and one breakout room was devoted to French-speaking participants.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Many of the stakeholders who participated in our Dialogue were already making progress in the malnutrition space and thus acting with urgency. The convenors of the Dialogue were able to silently observe the breakout room sessions, and ensure that stakeholders were consistently respectful towards one another in their interactions. The breakout room topics were meant to stimulate discussion on the complexity of the food system and be broad enough to accommodate/recognize the complexity of the work being done by the participants in their settings. The Dialogue embraced multi-stakeholder inclusivity as we had over 50 participants in the breakout sessions from over 24 countries across sub-Saharan Africa. There was also substantial youth representation in the Dialogue (as both facilitators and participants), as youth participation was recognized as one of the gaps in Action Track 1, and because NCD Child is a coalition championing the rights and needs of children, adolescents, and young people. The Dialogue aimed to complement the work of others, by linking participants to different resources from various organizations; during the summary sessions on both days and via email following the event, links to additional webinars, and documents were shared. We also encouraged participants to share their own work/resources with others during the Dialogue. The Dialogue built trust by engaging with participants over 2 days; as the participants became more familiar with one another, they became more inclined to participate actively in both the breakout room sessions and in the plenary sessions. In addition, because the Chatham House rule was in effect (whereby neither the identity nor the affiliation of participants were revealed in the discussion notes, and breakout sessions were not recorded) the participants trusted that their engagement would be anonymous.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

Convenors should build the principles of engagement into their training sessions for the facilitators. If time allows, Convenors should also reference the principles of engagement during the plenary session of their Dialogue, to reassure and reinforce to participants, that the Dialogue is being conducted in accordance with the UN Food Systems Summit. For Dialogues involving participants with different language requirements, translation services should be available to all, to ensure inclusivity. There should also be low or no cost to participating in the Dialogue, and participants should be supported in their participation (e.g., if they require a formal letter to take time away from work). Dialogue Convenors should also consider co-convening their Dialogue with local partners due to the importance of understanding local context, and to ensure that the participant invitees and breakout room topics will lead to productive discussions aligned with the needs of the region. Convenors should offer to circulate resources for participants, and should create a listserv for participants who would like to be involved after the Dialogue. Convenors should also build unscheduled time into the Dialogue, so that participants can network, speak more informally to one another, and share work.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

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Yes

☐

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The specific theme of our workshop was ‘The Double-Burden of Malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa: Engaging Youth in Access to Nutritious Food’. This theme emerged from Action Track 1 (ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all), and one of the priority areas of the summit (youth empowerment). As NCD Child is particularly interested in the needs of children, adolescents and young people, and addressing the inequities that this group faces when it comes to their health and well-being, one of the levers of change of the Summit, human rights, was also used to frame the discussions.

Participants from across sub-Saharan Africa, working to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and/or working to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases were invited to share their current actions or new ideas on how to ensure youth have access to sufficient quantities of affordable and safe food products (Action Track 1, Strand 2), and how to engage youth in these actions.

The participants were also meant to discuss the projections and scenarios for actions that can reduce the number of people who cannot afford a healthy diet (e.g., reallocations of subsidies for food production, food production R&D reallocations, lowering taxes on nutritious foods, productivity increases in nutritious foods, pro-nutrition changes in trade rules and regimes, etc.), that were produced by the Summit’s Science Group. These actions, and others, such as the commercial determinants of malnutrition, and social protection programs for malnutrition, were recognized as being able to reduce the triple burden of malnutrition, and poverty and inequality (Action Track 1, Strand 1).

To a lesser extent, participants were meant to focus on ideas for vocational programs for rural youth that offer integrated training in multiple skills (Action Track 1, Strand 1); vocational programs for agriculture have the potential to do more than just secure access to food, they have the potential to economically empower youth.

The four topics of our breakout room sessions were: 1) youth-lead solutions to the triple-burden of malnutrition; 2) youth engagement in strengthening food systems; 3) integrating approaches to multiple NCDs and risk factors; and 4) food systems and the double-burden of malnutrition during COVID-19.

ACTION TRACKS

✓	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

	Finance	✓	Policy
	Innovation		Data & Evidence
✓	Human rights		Governance
✓	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
			Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Many key conclusions emerged across breakout rooms sessions. Participants agreed that actions would need to be taken to tax unhealthy foods and make healthy foods more accessible/affordable. Participants also agreed on the need to establish connections between youth and policy-makers; participants felt that youth should be supported to advocate and develop solutions for their own cause. Participants further highlighted the need for funding and capacity-building for youth initiatives, and in particular, initiatives in agriculture.

Another key conclusion to emerge across breakout room sessions was the importance of expanding the school curriculum. Participants felt that nutrition courses (where available) should include lessons on climate change, agriculture and cooking. However, participants also recognized the utility of life-long learning, and suggested that education/courses be provided beyond the classroom, within the community, or health care facilities. It was also suggested that these lessons be accompanied by the creation of gardens, as a practical application of the course material.

Participants also agreed on the need to establish connections between different stakeholders along the food supply chain (i.e. consumers, producers, local farmers, etc.). They felt that this strategy could contribute to consumer knowledge and empowerment.

Finally, shame and inequality were two major themes to emerge from the breakout room sessions. Participants felt that hunger was stigmatized within communities, and noted that this would be a challenge to overcome the burden of malnutrition. Participants also recognized inequality, and in particular, gender inequality, as a challenge to food access; it was stated that girls and women were not prioritized for meals, and that disparities in school attendance could also prevent girls from being empowered to participate in advocacy and agriculture through education.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

Actions for Impact

Participants felt that the burden of diet- and nutrition-related NCDs could be reduced through a de-colonization of the African diet; since the African diet was once predominantly fruits and vegetables, a diet centered on these foods (and additional nutrient dense crops such as soy) and attentive to healthy means of preparation, could significantly impact the triple-burden of malnutrition. Participants said that to encourage a shift to this diet, healthy foods would need to be made affordable, and unhealthy foods would need to be taxed. Food policies with health and environmental goals were recognized as critical to achieving this, and participants recommended that youth groups working on NCDs and climate collaborate, and be consulted by policy-makers. However, participants noted that for youth to participate in policy-making processes, they would need more information about their rights, and current policies and legislation that impacts them. Participants also noted the importance of working with youth across the gender spectrum, different geographic settings, socioeconomic statuses and experiences.

Participants stated that strengthening the relationship between consumers and (local) producers, and prioritizing agro-ecological practices (e.g. using ecological pesticides, supporting soil health, and developing agro-forests) could positively impact the triple-burden of malnutrition. Participants believed that greater diversity on farms would translate into greater nutritional diversity.

Participants also felt that students, their parents, community members and farmers should be engaged in holistic health education, including physical activity and nutrition components (with modules for different diets, such as plant-based diets, and culturally appropriate ways of eating healthy) and that these individuals could cascade this education to the rest of the community.

Participants recommended several actions for schools: investments in gardens, actions for improved school attendance, the addition of climate change topics to the curriculum, and the development of safe and engaging youth platforms (i.e. youth clubs and social media). Some participants also spoke about: improving the food environment in health care facilities, food processing and the need for safer regulations, and greater corporate social responsibility. Moreover, participants felt that actions should be multi-sectoral (including the private sector, agricultural sector, and education sector) and empower the consumer.

Assessing Progress

Participants felt that progress could be assessed through: (1) rates and trends of malnutrition in all its forms, (2) levels of dietary diversity at the household level and (3) changes to school feeding programmes. Participants also stated that assessments should involve youth, use both qualitative and quantitative methods, and would benefit from effective monitoring from planning to implementation. Further, they noted that organizations already doing work in the community should be accessible to youth for assistance and/or that youth could self-report behavioral changes in their eating habits. Finally, participants noted that capacity-building would take time and may be difficult to measure, and that the theory of change should be outlined early on and clearly so that successful efforts could be replicated.

Challenges

Participants mentioned that school feeding programmes, though beneficial for providing meals to children, do not contribute to food security of households. Additionally, participants cited the increase in processed food consumption as a challenge. Participants further explained that processed food consumption has risen in part because the responsibility of the food system has been given to corporations which are more concerned with profits than nutrition. Finally, participants noted the gap between the concepts of culture and nutrition, and the social challenges that might make eating healthy difficult.

ACTION TRACKS

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KEYWORDS

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| | Finance | | Policy |
| | Innovation | | Data & Evidence |
| | Human rights | | Governance |
| ✓ | Women & Youth Empowerment | | Trade-offs |
| | | | Environment and Climate |

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

Actions for Impact

Participants felt that more funding should be provided for youth involvement in food systems, and that the government should do more to encourage multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder involvement (i.e. involvement of both those affected by food insecurity and those with the power and influence to change this) using existing resources and toolkits for guidance. Participants said that the capacity of youth to advocate for food systems should be leveraged and strengthened with agricultural training.

Participants also stated that to impact youth engagement in strengthening food systems, information and knowledge shared on this topic should be easy to understand, accessible, and specific to diverse groups (such as pregnant and lactating women, children, etc.). They further explained that information critical across the life course should be communicated in the school curriculum, as students would be able to share this knowledge with their broader communities. Additional recommendations for education included: (1) teaching children to diplomatically interrogate the barriers in their setting, (2) expanding the school nutrition curriculum (to include meal preparation and context-specific food production and access), and (3) providing nutrition education to health care students and workers.

Participants recognized the utility of technology and social media to market and communicate advocacy projects, and connect youth to one another. Participants recommended that future projects combine aims (i.e. agriculture promotion and youth engagement, or addressing the double-burden of malnutrition and economic empowerment). They also stated that strategies that have been proven to work at the local level should be scaled up or tested in other settings.

Finally, home gardens and livestock farming, linking to markets for surplus trading to enhance access to foods, and the language and positioning of the issue of hunger were all identified as areas for impact. In particular, participants noted that the issue of hunger should be positioned as a human rights issue, to mitigate the stigma/shame associated with hunger.

Assessing Progress

Participants noted that social media platforms could translate into data using back-end analytics and that google forms could then be used to enter profiles of engagers on social media. These profiles in turn could be used to help focus campaigns to identified key areas and motivate policy reform lobbying with policymakers. In addition, participants suggested that existing research institutions gather evidence on barriers to youth involvement at the local-level, and assess progress of new interventions.

Challenges

Participants recognized that communities often do not feel a sense of ownership of the programs that are brought in by 'outsiders'; thus, two challenges to youth engagement in the food system will be to advocate for greater involvement of the local community in existing programming and to advocate for participatory approaches with incoming development organizations.

Other challenges noted by the participants included: low visibility/understanding of the right to nutrition when compared to the right to health, lack of women's empowerment in food systems, and the absence of platforms for youth to share their ideas on nutrition-related topics.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

Actions for Impact

Participants stated that attention should shift from communicable to NCD risks and prevention, and extend beyond nutrition topics, to healthy environments and good sanitation. They also said that advocacy, mentorship and funding opportunities for youth could assist with this shift.

Participants also mentioned that children should be taught to enjoy nutritious food through creative means (such as cartoons) to combat fast-food marketing, and agreed that governments should tax unhealthy/processed foods and harmful substances such as tobacco, and reduce taxes on traditional foods/healthy foods. In addition, participants recognized that consumers must be empowered to choose traditional rather than processed foods through other means.

Improving primary school curriculum to integrate NCD information with nutrition and agriculture topics, was also said to be critical to teaching about NCDs and improving the overall health literacy of the community. At the university-level, it was recognized that male students purchase more fast foods than their female counterparts (as most young men do not cook in the African context), underscoring the importance of teaching young boys about nutritious foods, and eliminating the stigma around cooking. Moreover, promoting gender equality, through the sharing of domestic and agricultural duties, and through encouraging men to attend health services with their wives and children (to receive health information), were recognized as important actions.

Participants also recognized the importance of teaching people living with non-communicable diseases (PLWNCDs) the specifics of their dietary needs and risk factors (such as overconsumption of animal protein) and providing this education at health institutions. They also discussed the impact of COVID-19 on jobs, and how opportunities in agriculture (i.e., growing food) could have supported families both economically and nutritionally. Participants suggested that farmers be incentivized to cultivate nutritious (and staple) foods within the community, and use farming techniques that improve fruit and vegetable yields.

Several other actions were put forward as ideas to impact the prevalence of NCDs: (1) employing best practices from other similar contexts, (2) gathering additional data on some of the most pressing issues to inform policymaking, and (3) involving youth and community leaders in creating policies on nutrition that support agriculture, and food production, processing, and marketing.

Assessing Progress

Participants suggested several ways to assess progress, such as using: (1) statistics on PLWNCDs, (2) surveys on consumer food purchase decisions, (3) shadow reporting, or policy-monitoring to hold policy-makers accountable, and (3) pre/post intervention data on key indicators. Participants noted that this data should be collected and shared transparently and accessibly, and monitoring and evaluation systems should be robust, especially within school programming. Participants also recommended engaging with research participants online, and conducting assessments on the effectiveness of data collection methods and implementation strategies.

Challenges

At the community level, tobacco use was said to deplete household income and divert funds from basic expenses like groceries. Behavior changes and belief systems were also stated to be challenges as information about healthier lifestyles might not be well-received in some communities, and there are some misconceptions around food additives/chemicals in Africa. Disparities in access to nutritious foods within communities, and large family sizes (due to lack of access to, or acceptance of family planning methods) were also said to be challenges to sufficient access to nutritious foods.

At a systemic level, participants said that policies do not translate to the local-level, and community members find it difficult to share their experiences with influential stakeholders due to low confidence. Further, it was said that the right to food is not understood well enough for community members to hold their governments accountable.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

Actions for Impact

Participants said that governments should increase taxes on unhealthy food (especially ultra-processed foods), and encourage or support local production of healthy food to prioritize the public health interests of the community. In addition to these reforms, participants felt that policies should be developed to ensure transparent branding and packaging of foods.

Participants also agreed that school-aged children should be taught about nutritious foods, but that continuous education throughout the life-course would be critical to sustain the impact of these programs. In addition to nutrition education, participants felt that more should be done to educate and empower youth on farming opportunities. Farming was to be seen as a means of both securing nutritious foods and economically empowering youth.

Moreover, engaging and meaningfully involving different sectors and stakeholders, including the most vulnerable and marginalized, was recognized as a critical action by participants. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the power structures within the food system, and the need to empower local people and systems became evident. To do this, participants said that the barriers to participate in agriculture should be minimized, and contract farming should be supported by the government. Participants also recognized the importance of strengthening the food value chain, conducting food safety tests before export and developing local agricultural systems to ensure a balanced diet can be achieved (i.e., nutrition-sensitive agriculture).

Finally, participants spoke to the double-burden of malnutrition in the context of NCDs. Participants felt that more should be done to understand the local causes of NCDs, and that civil society organizations, and NCD departments (where available) should work to address these policies together.

Assessing Progress

Participants cited various ways in which progress towards food systems and the double-burden of malnutrition during the COVID-19 pandemic could be assessed: (1) the degree to which youth self-report feeling empowered to act on these issues, (2) the degree of collaboration between stakeholders on these issues and (3) the participation level of marginalized groups in decision-making spaces on these issues.

Challenges

Many challenges were discussed during the breakout sessions.

Participants stated that before the COVID-19 pandemic the cost of food prices had increased, especially healthy and nutritious food compared to processed food, and that availability of nutritious food vs. processed food was also a challenge in some regions. However, lack of adequate education on how to combine locally available foods to maintain a balanced diet was also stated to be a challenge where food was/is available.

Participants also recognized the role of cultural/power dynamics in access to food. For example, in some communities, economic decisions are made exclusively by the heads of household, and where there is gender inequality, girls may not be given priority for meals.

Further, food waste and lack of adequate storage facilities for food products were also seen as challenges by participants. Some other challenges included: (1) belief systems surrounding food (i.e., that it is for satisfaction rather than nutrition), (2) the influence of aggressive modes of fast-food advertising on consumer purchasing behavior, and (3) the threats that forest degradation and rapid population expansion pose to food security. All of these were said to be exacerbated by poor involvement of locals in implementation and decision-making on interventions, and inadequate collaboration between sectors involved in food systems and malnutrition.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Participants held diverse opinions on who should be engaged as “champions” or advocates for the double-burden of malnutrition. While some participants felt that high-profile individuals or young professionals would be best equipped to elevate these issues, others felt that youth working at the grassroots level, or “authentic” youth could better speak to the reality of the burden of malnutrition in all its forms, and should be encouraged and equipped to become champions for their own cause.

Participants also differed in opinion on the utility and efficacy of the media and technology in disseminating information pertaining to the double-burden of malnutrition. While the media and technology in general were suggested as effective advocacy tools, they were also recognized as exclusionary to the most vulnerable and marginalized. Thus, many participants felt that alternative, and context-appropriate platforms should be pursued.

Participants also held opposing positions on the best approach to advocacy for healthy diets. Some participants felt that advocacy efforts for healthy diets should not commence within a region until access to these healthy foods could be secured for the community, while others felt that advocacy efforts for healthy diets and knowledge sharing should commence even in the absence of a stable food system.

Diverse opinions emerged on who should drive change. Some participants stated the need to educate families about growing healthier food crops and cooking nutritious foods at home, and that children should be the drivers of change via education through school or health clubs. However, other participants stated that industries should be educated and incentivized to produce and provide nutritious foods that are affordable.

There were also opposing views on the stakeholders who should be prioritized. Some participants felt that local farmers should be given priority over mass producers within the food system, however, arguments were put forth for both stakeholders. Participants reasoned that supporting local farmers could reduce the carbon footprint of the food supply chain, and also minimize barriers from farm-to-table. However, participants also stated that the costs of local produce from small-scale farms might be higher, and that small farms may not be able to sufficiently support entire communities. Alternatively, mass producers were said to be capable of providing greater quantities of food and at lower cost, but the environmental costs and risks associated with supply-chain breakdown were said to be higher.

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