

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Thursday, 3 June 2021 10:00 GMT +01:00
<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Improving Child Nutrition in Nigeria through Food System actions
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Choices International Foundation in partnership with United Nations Children's Fund, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Partnership for Child Development and Nigerian Heart Foundation
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/13010/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/13010/</a>
<b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>	Independent
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>	Nigeria

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

177

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

49

19-30

80

31-50

38

51-65

9

66-80

1

80+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

79 Male

98 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

10 Agriculture/crops  
Fish and aquaculture  
Livestock  
Agro-forestry  
Environment and ecology  
Trade and commerce

40 Education  
Communication  
29 Food processing  
Food retail, markets  
1 Food industry  
Financial Services

26 Health care  
34 Nutrition  
29 National or local government  
Utilities  
Industrial  
8 Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

24 Small/medium enterprise/artisan  
10 Large national business  
Multi-national corporation  
12 Small-scale farmer  
5 Medium-scale farmer  
Large-scale farmer  
13 Local Non-Governmental Organization  
25 International Non-Governmental Organization  
4 Indigenous People  
35 Science and academia

Workers and trade union  
27 Member of Parliament  
Local authority  
8 Government and national institution  
Regional economic community  
United Nations  
International financial institution  
14 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance  
Consumer group  
Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The Independent Food Systems Summit Dialogue organized by Choices International Foundation (CIF) and partners ( Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Partnership for Child Development (PCD), the Nigerian Heart Foundation (NHF), and Scaling- Up Nutrition Business Network (SBN) recognized the need to have a different aspect of the food systems captured in the national pathway to build a sustainable food system. It is in this regard that Choices International Foundation and partners put together a dialogue to capture important voices and foster important conversation in a bid to promote the creation of a sustainable food system. To put together a rich dialogue, a wide array of stakeholders were brought on board to contribute and lend their voices to the discussion. Stakeholders ranked from academia, nutrition and health experts, private individuals, and government ministries and officials. The event also connected with the locals directly connected to these children or nutrition intervention programs directed at children. The dialogue also focused on consolidating current progress work in the country by examining programs carried out in the country focused on solving the problem of child malnutrition especially children in the school-aged bracket. One of such is the Home- Grown School Feeding with consideration to how it can be harnessed to improve child nutrition by (1) Making food value chains more nutrition-sensitive (2) Encouraging food value chain activities to address the double burden of malnutrition (3) Incentives and disincentives to encourage actors across the food supply chain and food environment to promote and support healthy diets for children and adolescents. Also, the efforts of biofortification, Large- scale Food Fortification (LSFF), supplementation, Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) to address micronutrient deficiency in the Nigerian population.

### HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The dialogue appreciated and recognized the complexity of the problem. This was reflected in how the issues were raised in sequential order to be able to draw connections and patterns between them and how they interact with themselves. In the case of the school feeding program, the complexity of how carrying out the program without having policies that are targeted towards regulating the food environment of the children makes the program less effective. Different angles were reflected in the dialogue about the need for adopting a national food criteria system that improves consumer choices including adopting for children of school age. Various stakeholders were part of the dialogue to draw learnings and patterns in a bid to make recommendations. Partners with the school feeding program gave lessons on what has been done so far and current efforts to make it a focal point of nutrition-sensitive intervention for school-aged children. Local farmers, SME owners in the different states whereby the school feeding programs are in operation also gave feedback on the project and some of the drawbacks. Experts shared the potential role of food standards for creating a healthy food environment and encouraging children to adopt healthy dietary habits. Stakeholders from academia shared how nutrition education and behavioral change programs make significant gains as well, from educating the children, caregivers, policymakers, and everyone involved. Stakeholders from the government also gave an update on working policies to support programs that improve child health and nutrition. Together, every stakeholder present gave complementary recommendations to help chart a way for building a sustainable food environment around school-aged children. The dialogue gave an ambiance of trust-building between various stakeholders as each one reported their contribution to the issue at hand while also identifying gaps that are expected to be filled. This will ensure the accountability of every contributing player in the food system and environment.

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

The principles of engagement are clear guidelines, if followed, which tend to give a rich and easy-to-understand dialogue. The principles are holistic and work at all levels either national, sub-national, or independent dialogues. For anyone trying to organize a dialogue, the implementation of the principles starts at the early stage of planning and should be reflected all through the planning phase till implementation. The understanding of the principles will help in the curation of themes, timing, and facilitators. Appropriate timing is given to the discussion of pertinent issues that align with the overarching objectives of the Food Systems Summit, embrace the complexity of issues, and understanding how they all interact with each other. It is also best to have made grounded research work and bring about excellent conversation starters based on already existing discussions, programs, or interventions in the area of the identified problem. This helps in appreciating and complementing already existing solutions proposed by other bodies.

# 3. METHOD

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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?**

**Yes**

**No**

# 4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

## MAJOR FOCUS

Africa is ranked second to Asia as the continent with the most malnourished children in the world. Within Africa, Nigeria suffers the brunt of malnutrition with the most significant proportion of under-nourished children. The National Nutrition and Health Survey (2018) estimated that 32% of Nigerian children under the age of 5 are considered stunted. This implies that about 1 in every 3 Nigerian children suffers from chronic malnutrition. In addition, 7% of Nigerian children under the age of 5 suffer from wasting, 19.9% are underweight, and 1.2% are overweight. Although UNICEF defined a child as a human being below eighteen, children above the age of 6 are rarely included in national surveys, policies, programs, and budgets. Studies carried out on state levels show the prevalence of malnutrition in all its forms among school-aged children and adolescents as well. These data show that Nigeria is suffering from malnutrition in all its forms, and nutrition actions focusing on children in all stages are needed to improve nutrition outcomes.

Malnutrition has a direct negative influence on the immune system, making malnourished individuals susceptible to diseases, worsening illnesses, and even causing death. According to UNICEF, undernutrition is the direct or underlying cause of 45% of deaths of children younger than five years. As well as the cause of poor performance in school, which leads to low socio-economic achievement, is one of the functional consequences of chronic malnutrition, that is, in addition to physical growth retardation. The effects of malnutrition in all its forms in childhood are not limited to childhood. They often persist into adulthood by predisposing malnourished children to diet-related NCDs later in life. As a consequence, malnutrition has a long-term impact on both the community and the country at large. Malnutrition can cause a decline in economic development. Thus, countries with higher rates of malnutrition tend to experience retardation in the economy.

Given the malnutrition as mentioned above situation among children in Nigeria and its relation to morbidity, mortality and economic development in the country, tackling malnutrition in all its forms is vital to the country. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shown a clear threat to food and nutrition security, malnutrition requires urgent prioritization to ensure that past nutrition gains are not lost.

A low-quality diet is one of the causes of malnutrition, whether overweight, obesity, or under-nutrition, including micronutrient deficiency and diet-related NCDs. As evidenced by the prevalence of malnutrition in Nigeria, many children do not receive the diets needed in the right quality, quantity, and frequency for their growth and development. The food system's role is to deliver a nutritious, safe, affordable, diverse and sustainable diet. The food system is challenged in supporting food choices consistent with healthy diets and good nutrition outcomes. However, the nutritional needs of children, most especially children above 5, are often not prioritized. This is a missed opportunity because school years represent a critical period for the growth, development, cognitive potential, and survival of children and the formation of long-term dietary and lifestyle habits. Although children in Nigeria constitute almost half of the whole population, they are often neglected in the growing discourse about food systems. The ongoing Food System Dialogues offer an opportunity for shared understanding and experience among various stakeholders working in the Food System to create pathways, intentions, and commitments to improve child nutrition in Nigeria.

The overall objective of the independent dialogue is to discuss and recommend workable pathways for the improvement of child nutrition through evidence-based food system actions in Nigeria. To understand challenges and explore untapped opportunities in the food system for better child nutrition outcomes

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

## MAIN FINDINGS

As evidenced by data, Nigeria is suffering from malnutrition in all its forms, and nutrition actions focusing on children in all stages are needed to improve nutrition outcomes. The State of the World's Children 2019: Children, food, and nutrition report highlighted the prevalence of malnutrition in all its forms among children in Nigeria and other parts of the world. It noted that as children transition to soft or solid foods around six-month-old, many are introduced to the wrong types of diets. As children grow older, they are increasingly exposed to unhealthy food-driven mostly by inappropriate marketing, an abundance of ultra-processed foods high in fats, salts, and sugars in urban and rural areas, and increasing access to fast foods and overly sweetened beverages. Consequently, relevant actors from the government, private sector, donors and implementers, businesses shared understanding and experience to create pathways, intentions, and commitments to improve child nutrition in Nigeria. Recommendations and transition steps include:

- (1) Develop clear and easy science-based national dietary guidelines for children and adolescents to address malnutrition in all its forms (undernutrition including micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, and obesity).
- (2) Develop and enforce evidence-based standards (preferably mandatory) aligned with nutrition goals for children and adolescents for school meals, procurement strategies, marketing to children, fortification and bio-fortification, education initiatives, social protection programs such as school feeding programs, etc.
- (3) Drive food suppliers to seek the best interest of children by incentivizing the provision of healthy, convenient, and affordable foods
- (4) Build healthy food environments to shape the diets and habits of children and adolescents using evidence-based approaches such as easy to understand front- of- pack labeling or visual cues, restriction on the marketing of unhealthy foods, fiscal policies such as taxation on sugar, etc.
- (5) Improve nutrition education and behavioral change programs to enable children to learn and adopt healthy dietary habits

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

These are the priority actions needed in the next 3 years that will have the greatest impact in improving child nutrition:

- (1) Strengthening the capacity of all implementers of the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme to ensure that they can use the school meal planner to develop and prepare nutritionally adequate meals and generate predictable demand for commodities from farmer groups
- (2) Strengthening linkages between farmer cooperatives and the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme demand
- (3) Addressing challenges to adequate food production by farmers, including limited access to improved planting materials, high costs of inputs, and physical insecurity
- (4) Increased monitoring of the quality of food delivered through the Home-Grown School Feeding Program and associated feedback.

The indicators for success:

- (1) The volume of Home-Grown School Feeding Programme commodities supplied by local farmers increases
- (2) Quality, dietary diversity, and nutrient content of meals served to school children meets standards
- (3) Number of children fed, the number of schools covered, and the number of cooks employed by the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme increases.

Actions needed:

- (1) School-Based Management Committees, including Parent-Teachers' Associations, must be more actively engaged in monitoring the quality compliance of school meals and reporting shortfalls
- (2) Civil society organizations such as Consumer Advocacy for Food Safety and Nutrition initiative (CAFSANI) should also be more actively engaged in monitoring the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
- (3) Increased investment in the school feeding programme by federal and state governments
- (4) Choices International Foundation to support the establishment of improved standards for meals and snacks served to children in and around schools
- (5) NEPAD and Partnership for Child Development (PCD) to increase technical assistance to build the capacity of programme implementers to use school meal planner

### ACTION TRACKS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

These are the priority actions needed in the next 3 years that will have the greatest impact in improving child nutrition:

- (1) Expansion of mandatory fortification process to local millers, including related regulation
- (2) Enable linkages between small and medium scale enterprises and research institutes, to facilitate knowledge transfer and increase the production, supply, and affordability of nutritious food products
- (3) Investment in research institutes to develop product solution to improve nutrition
- (4) Strengthen and expand/increase platforms that provide technical support for running nutritious food products business to small and medium scale enterprises
- (5) Assessments to understand the needs of small and medium scale enterprises and tailor financial support according to needs
- (6) Improve fortification governance and coordination mechanisms
- (7) Implementing actions to ensure that micronutrients in fortified foods do not get lost during storage, display, and repackaging at the retail level
- (8) Fortification compliance monitoring, coupled with regulation
- (9) Identify innovations and/or new food vehicles to increase the reach of micronutrients through mandatory fortification
- (10) Scale-up and sustain the availability of planting materials for biofortified crops
- (11) Expand the commercialization of biofortified crops
- (12) Widespread awareness creation, including at community levels, about biofortified crops and their benefits

The indicators for success:

- (1) The numbers of people consuming biofortified crops will tremendously increase
- (2) Fortified food products will retain their nutrient contents along the value chain stages from production to procurement by the final consumer

Actions needed:

- (1) Research institutes, including the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO), and Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute, need to more widely advertise products that they have developed that can be commercialized by small and medium scale enterprises
- (2) National Agricultural Seeds Council should be engaged in ensuring the availability of planting materials for biofortified crops
- (3) Private sector organizations, including small and medium scale enterprises, partner with research organizations to commercialize products from research and increase access to nutritious foods
- (4) National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), and Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission to monitor and enforce fortification standards more systematically
- (5) Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to provide technical assistance to regulatory agencies and increase accountability for monitoring, and enforcing standards
- (6) Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Business Network (SBN) to provide technical assistance to small and medium-scale enterprises to facilitate compliance with fortification standards
- (7) HarvestPlus, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), and Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Business Network (SBN) to support the expansion and commercialization of biofortified crops
- (8) Development partners (including Aliko Dangote Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) to support the effective delivery and scale-up of fortification and biofortification

### 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                          |
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### KEYWORDS

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

## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

These are the priority actions needed in the next 3 years that will have the greatest impact in improving child nutrition:

- (1) Establishment of nutrient, ingredients, and safety standards for food products, meals, and snacks provided to children, including in or around schools and homes, to ensure that healthy foods are provided to children and adolescents and unhealthy foods are minimized
- (2) Development of a nutrient profiling system to guide food labeling, nutrition, and health claims, and marketing restrictions
- (3) Continuous food safety advocacy including education and training of street food vendors and food businesses on basic nutrition and food safety and ensuring fair practices in food chains. The safety of food is paramount; if it is not safe, it is not food!
- (4) Mandatory food labeling, including front of pack labeling
- (5) Increased enforcement of standards through sustainable and adequate funding mechanism, larger manpower, and technical capacity for the regulatory system to achieve faster monitoring and evaluation and feedback

The indicators for success:

- (1) Decentralized food registration to geopolitical zones, to help food organizations launch nutritious foods into the market quicker
- (2) Shorter food registration time: the inclusion of digital processes will reduce delay in getting products to the market
- (3) Reduced morbidity: safe foods will promote health, but unsafe foods will promote morbidity among the target age groups
- (4) Adequate monitoring and evaluation will reduce defaulters

Actions needed:

- (1) Nigerian Institute of Food Science and Technology should be engaged regarding street foods and food safety, as they have implemented a successful program in 7 LGAs in Lagos, Nigeria. There is a need to also extend this program to other parts of the country.
- (2) National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), and Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission need to be effectively engaged in setting, monitoring, and enforcing standards
- (3) Choices International Foundation and other partners (including the Nigerian Heart Foundation) to support the development of standards and nutrient profiling system
- (4) Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to provide technical assistance to regulatory agencies and increase accountability for setting, monitoring, and enforcing labeling and marketing standards
- (5) Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network (SBN) to provide technical assistance to small and medium scale enterprises to facilitate compliance with labeling standards

### ACTION TRACKS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

These are the priority actions needed in the next 3 years that will have the greatest impact in improving child nutrition:

- (1) Development of food-based dietary guidelines, including child/adolescent-specific guidelines
- (2) Advancing Nutrition Education: A healthy food environment and nutrition education can foster and support better food choices and practices among/for children. A child's food environment starts from home, school, and the school environment, there is therefore an urgent need for an appropriate nutrition education both at home for and by parents and the school environment.
- (3) Children's eating habits orientation can be changed by using school curricula to provide nutrition education in schools.
- (4) Community mobilization, sensitization, and extension services through various health care services, to drive nutrition education in guiding parents and caregivers on how to change children's eating behaviour.
- (5) Digitalization – Games, apps, infographics, and social media that will shape behavioral change communication among children. The use of social media among school children
- (6) Nutrition education for producers to deliver nutritious food products

The indicators for success:

- (1) Existence of food-based dietary guidelines to structure nutrition education
- (2) Nutrition information is provided through multiple settings (including health facilities, workplaces, schools, faith-based gatherings, and communities) and channels (conventional and contemporary)

Actions needed:

- (1) Government agencies to develop policies and programs to increase public awareness of the importance of a healthy diet for children and foster food environments that enable healthy food choices for children (from first 1,000 days to school age and pre-teen children)
- (2) Academia such as the Nutrition Society of Nigeria (NSN) to build critical manpower for effective nutrition education
- (3) The private sector, civil society organizations, and development partners to invest and build the capacities of individuals and institutions to adopt food and nutrition practices that promote good health and nutrition (skills).

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

- (1) Some stakeholders perceive that the targeting of school-aged children and/or provision of school meals is not a cost-effective or efficient way to improve nutrition. Such stakeholders noted that meals served by the programme were sometimes of poor quality, programme costs did not appear sustainable, and school feeding was disregarding
- (2) Some key stakeholders perceive that certain foods that are widely accepted and are part of the food culture, including instant noodles, should be mandatorily fortified to increase the reach of fortified products and consequently increase micronutrient coverage. Other stakeholders considered instant noodles to be an unhealthy food and highlighted that there is no point mandating fortification for a product that you would like people to consume less of.
- (3) It was emphasized that establishing nutrient and ingredient standards for food products targeted at children, around which all stakeholders can converge, will be crucial for decision making around specific products
- (4) The cost of doing business in Nigeria has a direct implication on the cost of nutritious foods. Compliance with food and labelling standards can increase the costs of doing business and make products more expensive, leading to reduced demand, consequent defaulting by the private sector in a bid to reduce costs, and conflicts between the private sector and regulatory agencies. Costs associated with compliance with improved standards can be managed if most of the raw materials used by the private sector are locally sourced at lower costs. Hence, more efficient production and backward integration need to be prioritized, the responsibility of parents to their children.
- (5) It was highlighted that school feeding is a global intervention to improve the nutrition of school children and is being implemented in 161 countries across all income levels. Hence, the government should identify innovative financing to sustain the programme and improve the quality of meals.
- (6) Traditional food culture is not very compatible with millennial and digital parents and employed women, leading to a loss of knowledge about traditional foods and how to prepare them, and an increase in the demand for convenience foods.
- (7) There is aspirational food consumption towards foods that can be classified as unhealthy, due to modernization, urbanization, economic development, and market globalization. To be effective, therefore, nutrition education must better understand attitudes, beliefs, preferences, cultural factors, market and product factors, and economic factors. This understanding should then be harnessed to inspire, motivate, and enable people to change behaviour, using interdisciplinary methods across the fields of health education, psychology, and sociology, among other fields.

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