

## Talking points

Some talking points for your letter.

**The month, we are asking you to write to Secretary of State for International Development Anne-Marie Trevelyan and Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab to ask them for an urgent financial commitment to nutrition programmes from the end of 2020, when existing funding ends. These talking points should help you draft your letter, plus you can use the information in this month's Action Sheet and this [nutrition glossary](#).**

- Undernutrition contributes to around half of the 5 million deaths of children under five. 144 million children globally are chronically undernourished or 'stunted', impairing their physical and mental development.
- Poor nutrition harms a child's early development, increasing susceptibility to diseases and reducing the child's ability to learn at school and to earn a living later in life.
- Malnutrition makes children more susceptible to diseases including TB, and makes them less likely to benefit properly from vaccinations.
- Malnutrition in childhood reduces an individual's earning capacity by 10% and costs the global economy around US \$3.5 trillion each year.
- The world is way off track to meet the global targets on nutrition. An extra \$7 billion every year is needed to continue the fight against malnutrition.
- To continue its strong leadership in the fight against malnutrition, and encourage other donors to step up, the UK should pledge new funding for nutrition.

## What is the Nutrition for Growth ('N4G') agenda?

The N4G agenda was initiated in the UK in 2013 and is the mechanism by which international donors have been cooperating since then to tackle malnutrition. The Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, to be held in 2021 (date TBC), will provide a historic opportunity to transform the way the world tackles the global challenge of malnutrition.

The world is at a critical time for nutrition, midway through the United Nations 'Decade of Action on Nutrition', with only five years left to achieve World Health Organisation [targets](#) on maternal, infant and young child nutrition, and less than 10 years to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Summit will be held in 2021 in Tokyo, Japan (postponed from July this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic). Leading donors such as the UK should make pledges now, however, to help ensure that current funding levels for nutrition are at least maintained, as existing financing runs out at the end of this year. This is needed to ensure that all people, including the most vulnerable, have access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food by 2030.

More information at <https://nutritionforgrowth.org/>

# Case Study: COVID-19 increases prevalence of dangerous wasting



Photo credit: UNICEF / Helene Sandbu Ryeng

In this picture, Farida is sitting on her mother Julia's lap and having her mid-upper-arm circumference measured by a health worker.

Julia Dodo (22) is at Gurei Primary Health Care Centre in Juba, South Sudan for the first follow-up visit for her twins Farida and Roda (8 months).

“My girls were not feeling well. They had diarrhoea, cough, fever, so I took them here.”

“When I came here, they told me that my twins were malnourished. One is severely acute malnourished, the other one not so bad. They are already doing better.”

I was not scared to come here because of COVID-19, because I hadn't heard about it. It was here I learned about the disease. They told us that we need to keep our distance and wash our hands to protect ourselves. I have received soap here so that helps me.”

The centre is working to ensure that lifesaving activities, such as screening for and treatment of acute malnutrition, are continuing in a safe way. Handwashing facilities are reinforced and additional soap has been made available, and measures for physical distancing such as separation tapes in the waiting area have been introduced. All staff at the facility wear face masks and gloves and practise frequent handwashing. Equipment is frequently disinfected. All the families are also provided with soap to contribute to a more hygienic and safer environment for the children.

An additional 6.7 million children under the age of five could suffer from wasting – and therefore become dangerously undernourished – in 2020 as a result of the socio-economic impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. According to [an analysis published in \*The Lancet\*](#), 80% of these children would be from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Over half would be from South Asia alone. It is increasingly clear that the repercussions of the pandemic are causing more harm to children than the disease itself. Household poverty and food insecurity rates have increased, essential nutrition services and supply chains have been disrupted, and food prices have soared. As a result, the quality of children's diets has gone down and malnutrition rates will go up.

Wasting is a life-threatening form of malnutrition, which makes children too thin and weak, and puts them at greater risk of dying, poor growth, development and learning. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 47 million children were already wasted in 2019. Without urgent action, the global number of children suffering from wasting could reach almost 54 million over the course of the year. COVID-19 will also increase other forms of malnutrition in children and women, including stunting, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity as a result of poorer diets and the disruption of nutrition services.

Source: [UNICEF](#).