

Urgent: Nutrition funding after 2020

Help us avoid a cliff edge in funding for nutrition programmes.

We're fast approaching the end of the 2020, and as the year ends, so does the UK Government's financial pledge for tackling malnutrition in developing countries. Action is vital because globally, malnutrition is linked to nearly half of all the deaths in children under five years old. COVID-19 is exacerbating the existing problems too, and is predicted to cause millions more people to become malnourished because of a lack of access to normal health services and nourishing food. Good nutrition is important in the longer term because it helps reduce the risk of getting ill and dying from other diseases, helps children stay in school, and adults to reach their full potential.

The UK government has long been a leading donor in tackling malnutrition, founding the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) agenda in 2013. The next N4G summit will call upon donor governments to pledge in December 2021 – but that's over a year away, and money is needed now to tackle malnutrition, to ensure life-changing programmes aren't cut when they are most needed.

Now is likely to be our last chance this year to show the UK Government that this is an urgent problem and that their leadership is needed. Please write to your MP as soon as you can, explaining the urgency of tackling malnutrition. Ask them to write to the Secretary of State, Dominic Raab, asking the Government to renew their financial commitments to nutrition before the end of the year.

The scale and impact of malnutrition

Malnutrition, like hunger, can be caused by people not having *enough* to eat, but unlike hunger it's also caused by not eating enough *nutritious* foods, or being unable to absorb nutrients from food. Globally, malnutrition is [a cause in around 45% of deaths](#) in children under-five years old; in 2019 almost 3 million child deaths could have been prevented through improved nutrition. Malnutrition can also cause health problems for life: [149 million children under five are currently stunted](#), meaning chronic undernourishment has affected their height and their long term development.

Nutrition builds the foundation for healthier, more resilient people and communities, and underpins success in at least 12 out of 17 [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Well-nourished people have stronger immune systems and respond better to vaccines. Children are also likely to do better at school if they are properly nourished.

The impact of COVID-19

Before the pandemic, progress had been made to tackle hunger and malnutrition, but the world was still off track to meet nutrition targets such as [reducing the number of stunted children by 40%](#) by 2025, and the

pandemic is making it significantly harder to reach those goals. This year, COVID-19 is putting extra strain on health systems, disrupting nutrition services and [causing knock-on effects which exacerbate other health challenges](#). People's livelihoods have also been affected by lock-downs and food prices have increased. [Up to 80 million](#) more people could experience malnutrition as a result. Earlier this year, experts also estimated that over 100,000 [more children under 5 would die than usual](#) in 2020, half of those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As the global economy is predicted to shrink owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, donor funds are widely expected to reduce, so that a scenario of millions more malnourished children, and an undoing of more than five years of progress, is a real possibility. Unless new money is allocated in the next few months, nutrition programmes could have to be cut just when they are needed most.

The UK Government recently announced [£119 million in emergency aid](#) to alleviate extreme hunger and ease the impact of COVID-19. This is welcomed, but as well as playing its part in supplying emergency food, there must also be a longer-term plan to ensure that vulnerable people have access to sustainable and nutritious diets in 2021 and beyond.

Why UK support is vital

The UK has [a central role to play](#) in both providing funds, and encouraging other donors to step forward ahead of the [Nutrition for Growth Summit](#), to be hosted by Japan. The UK hosted the first summit in 2013, and the next one is due to take place in December 2021 (it was originally to have been around the Olympics in July this year but was postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic). An early signal of UK support will help ensure a successful N4G summit, and prevent funding for nutrition suddenly ending after 2020.

In 2019, the UK also made a commitment to prioritise ending preventable deaths of mothers, new-born babies and children in the developing world by 2030. It is not possible to fulfil this promise without prioritising nutrition, as nutrition is a cornerstone of children's survival and development.

Pressures on UK aid spending

The UK Government is currently conducting a Spending Review, which is expected to be announced later this month, and which will establish the overall level of funding for international development programmes. The UK aid budget has already been cut by £2.9 billion this year, because of the expected reduction in the size of the UK economy, making it more important than ever that remaining funds be directed at programmes that are the most effective at sustainable poverty reduction, in particular, nutrition programmes.

With funding for nutrition that has been pledged since 2013 coming to an end at the end of 2020, no additional funding pledges have yet been made by the UK Government. We therefore urgently need a UK announcement before the end of this year, as soon as

the Spending Review has been concluded. It is vital that the UK once again takes the lead by pledging funds to at least the same level as has been the case since 2013, for the period 2021-2025.

What can I do now?

If you have previously taken action to advocate for increased UK support for nutrition, a huge thank you! If you have written to your MP or to the Secretary of State this year, you may well have received feedback saying that the Government is supportive of ending malnutrition. However, it is now time to turn those words into action, by pledging concrete financial support for nutrition programmes around the world, so we are asking you to write once again!

We know that, especially when economic pressures are high, and with the additional costs of the COVID-19 pandemic, only strong public support for nutrition will ensure that the Government prioritises nutrition policies and funding. Your persistence is a big part of this! This month, please urgently contact your MP once again, asking them to write to the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, requesting that he maintains investments at least £120 million per year on programmes that directly target the reduction of malnutrition, and that he announces this before the end of 2020. We also ask that the Government commit to reaching 50 million women and children with high impact nutrition interventions over the next five years.

Please ask your MP to write to the Foreign Secretary as soon as possible, because the spending review is expected to conclude 'in the last weeks of November'.

Thank you if you are able to take action!

Take action!

1. Please **contact your MP asking them to write to the Foreign Secretary**, Rt. Hon. Dominic Raab MP. Explain the urgency of nutrition funding and ask your MP to call for a continued investment of at least £120 million per year on programmes that directly target the reduction of malnutrition, and that an announcement is made as soon as possible after the Spending Review and before the end of 2020.
2. Please **ask your friends and contacts to take this simple [online letter-writing action](#)**. For people not yet confident enough to write a personally-worded letter, this will amplify the impact of your own action and help show that you are not a lone voice!

Let us know that you've taken action by emailing Dela at delanderson@results.org.uk