

CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION ON TACKLING MALNUTRITION

PLENTY OF
WORDS, NO
ACTION. THIS
MONTH, CALL
FOR ACTION
TO TACKLE
MALNUTRITION

2021 was called the 'Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Year of Action', marking a year-long effort to keep up momentum on action for tackling global malnutrition. The year culminated in the N4G Summit in December, an important moment for galvanising funding and policy changes to tackle malnutrition. For RESULTS campaigners, 2021 was a year of action on nutrition, but the same can't be said for the UK Government. The UK did not renew its commitment to reach 50 million women, children and adolescent girls with nutrition programmes. However, after much advocacy by RESULTS campaigners, a belated N4G financial pledge was made in February 2022! Undernutrition is already the leading cause of death for children under 5 worldwide, and rates are set to rise. This year, the UK needs to take action and must renew its commitment to reach those most at risk of malnutrition.

Why is it an important time to tackle malnutrition?

- Good nutrition strengthens immune systems and resilience against illnesses, plays a major role in healthy cognitive development and is a key underlying factor in enabling people to live healthy lives.
- [Around 45% deaths among children under 5 years of age are linked to undernutrition](#) and in 2020, nearly one in three people in the world did not have access to adequate food - an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year.
- One of the devastating knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine is its impact on food and nutrition security worldwide, as Ukraine and Russia are among the world's most important producers of wheat and other agricultural commodities. This is causing significant disruption to food systems and is increasing malnutrition around the world. [East African countries import up to 90% of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia](#). Disruptions to food imports and sky-rocketing prices are pushing many governments to the brink, especially on top of the financial burden of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is exacerbating the pre-existing risk of a hunger crisis due to a massive two-year drought in countries across East Africa. [Humanitarian food and nutrition interventions are chronically underfunded](#) (only 2% of the UN appeal for Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia has been secured).
- There is a set of six [Global Nutrition Targets](#), endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2012, to be met by 2025. These targets and the associated implementation plan focus on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. However, the world is off course to meet five out of six of these targets.
- Malnutrition is in most cases preventable and treatable. With adequate finance and political commitments, governments can make progress on tackling malnutrition by 2025. For example, Guatemala is the only country on track to meet the Global Nutrition target on reducing rates of anaemia in women of reproductive age.

Read what Jane Napais Lankisa, a Youth Leader for Nutrition in Kenya, thinks about the UK's International Development Strategy in [our guest blog](#).
"The UK government should mainstream gender equality in all aspects of the IDS to promote women and girls' empowerment. When women and girls are empowered to claim their rights, it leads to improved health and nutrition for themselves and a better quality of life for their families and communities."

Image: Nutrition education session on food groups among adolescents in Lenkishon primary school, Kajiado county, Kenya.



What has the UK done on nutrition?

- At the [Nutrition for Growth](#) (N4G) Summit in 2021, Minister Wendy Morton announced that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will adopt the [OECD policy marker for nutrition](#) (more information on this [here](#)). This change will increase the effectiveness of existing programmes on nutrition, and enhance new programmes where improving nutrition is an objective. It was a technical and important policy change that RESULTS campaigners called for, and one that we welcome.
- The UK did not announce any funding at the N4G summit, but in early 2022 made a [financial commitment to N4G of £1.5 billion between 2022 and 2030](#). This is considerably less than what we were calling for. However, it is a relief that a pledge was made, and is testament to lots of your campaigning efforts.
- The recent FCDO International Development Strategy, which many of you took [action on last month](#), has a distinct lack of mention of nutrition. This is concerning given that good nutrition is fundamental for good health and poverty alleviation.
- The Government has come under [criticism recently for failing to support access to nutritious food across the UK](#), with funding to school meals cut and people increasingly [relying on food banks](#). While RESULTS doesn't work directly on food and nutrition in the UK, we believe that the [Right to Adequate Food](#) is a human right that should become a reality for everyone, everywhere.

What does the UK still need to do on nutrition?

In 2015, the UK made a commitment to reach 50 million women and girls with nutrition-relevant programmes over the next 5 years. This target encouraged the former Department for International Development (DFID) to carefully consider and increase its work on nutrition and as a result, the target was not only met, but [exceeded](#). However, this commitment was not renewed at the N4G Summit. It is well documented that [malnutrition is sexist](#), disproportionately affecting women and girls. The UK's recently released [International Development Strategy](#) (IDS) has a strong focus on 'unlocking the full potential' of women and girls, yet the strategy fails to address nutrition. Supporting women and girls' health can't be done without tackling malnutrition. It is also important that the financial pledge made earlier this year is appropriately delivered and is reaching those most at risk of being malnourished. The FCDO should therefore renew its commitment to reach 50 million children, women and adolescent girls over the next 5 years with nutrition-relevant programmes.

TAKE ACTION! This month:



1 Write to Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, urging the UK to renew its commitment to reach 50 million women, children and adolescent girls with nutrition-relevant programmes in the next 5 years. Highlight that this is important to ensure that the financial pledge is spent appropriately and effectively, targeting those most at risk of being malnourished, and that tackling malnutrition is essential for supporting women and girls, and reaching the WHO Global Nutrition Targets.

Contact details: Rt. Hon. Liz Truss MP, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH.

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Let us know that you've taken this month's action by emailing:

Campaigns Coordinator Tanya Begum at tanya.begum@results.org.uk