

### Background

Around the world, a **global food and nutrition crisis** has emerged impacting families, communities and countries. It has been driven by increased costs and decreased availability of key basic food commodities, particularly wheat and cooking oil. This crisis comes on the heels of the health and economic impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic. It has also been worsened by growing concern about the availability and affordability of fertilizer products, which threatens future agricultural harvests.

The result has caused a **significantly worrying situation in many countries** – especially those that are heavily dependent on imports for grain, cooking oil and fertilizer; those that were already facing high rates of malnutrition; and those that are facing the double burden of other crises including civil unrest and drought.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has convened **the Global Crisis Response Group** (GCRG) to advance a response on food, fuel and finance issues. In the [GCRG 2nd Brief](#) (June 2022), the group has identified that:

- People are coping with the crisis on a day-to-day basis through actions with worrying long-term consequences for nutrition and early childhood development therefore converting what can be a short-term crisis into a long-term protracted crisis with severe consequences on long term poverty, income distribution and development outcomes for decades to come if immediate actions are not taken.
- People are already reducing food purchases, and may be reducing the number of nutritious items, skipping meals or eating smaller portions. Women and girls who often eat less and eat last are particularly affected.
- Because of the shock of the war, among other factors, the number of chronically undernourished people are expected to increase in 2022, according to FAO. Under a moderate shock scenario, the global number of undernourished people in 2022 would increase by 7.6 million. Under a severe shock scenario, the number of undernourished people will increase by 13.1 million.
- Simulating the export shortfall expected from Ukraine and the Russian Federation during 2022 and 2023, and assuming no increase in the global availability of food as a result of increased food production elsewhere, FAO expects the number of undernourished people will increase by close to 19 million in 2023.
- Special attention must be given to the nutritional needs of the vulnerable, as well as women and children.

For the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, this represents a *critical moment* – both to **support countries** to ensure that nutritious foods remain available to everyone and to ensure that the global response to the current crisis is **country-driven**. In this regard, the global response needs to take into account the impacts and the challenges identified by countries, but also importantly, country-identified solutions.

To support countries, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement has compiled the key information and messaging contained in this brief and its annex, which can be used to:

- ✓ inform strategic decision-making
- ✓ advocate for a country-driven response approach
- ✓ support country-identified solutions

### **Topline messaging**

- With global food prices at an all-time high, the SUN Movement is concerned about the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on food and nutrition security globally, especially in economically vulnerable countries, those already fighting malnutrition, and those heavily dependent on Russia and Ukraine for grain, cooking oil and fertilizer.
- The consequences of the war are radiating outwards, triggering a tsunami wave of collateral hunger and malnutrition that is spreading across the globe – pushing millions into the malnutrition trap.
- Women and children suffer exponentially during times of food and nutrition crisis, and should therefore be prioritized, along with vulnerable people, as part of the response.
- SUN Countries are already responding to the global food and nutrition crisis and developing innovative solutions, including shifting to locally produced foods, and encouraging consumption of less costly and locally available nutritious alternatives such as whole grains, casava and sorghum, which they must be supported to implement.
- Countries can not afford to lose the nutrition progress and investments made since the last global food/nutrition security crisis. These could be lost if we do not continue – and even ramp up – the nutrition response across Africa and other hard-hit regions.
- The transition of food systems through the implementation of national and subnational food systems that nourish people, planet and prosperity must be geared up. The current crisis emphasizes the risk of a high-level dependency on food imports.
- Many developing countries are already heavily in debt. Subsidizing food and fertilizer costs will create more debt putting them in a precarious position. Governments must be supported to invest in their society and not become even more financially dependent.
- Member SUN Countries may wish to consider their government tables the issue of food and nutrition crisis response costs through a resolution during

the UN General Assembly and requests a concrete way forward – e.g. through debt swaps during the autumn meeting of World Bank and IMF.

### **Key SUN “asks”**

- Country-level solutions must be part of the global response.
- Nutrition must be part of the global response to the current crisis and be included in every national plan.
- Member States should not cut their Official Development Assistance pledges for nutrition. We must invest in humanity’s resilience and prevent the current food and nutrition crisis from cascading into many others.
- All countries should keep their markets open, resist unjustified and unnecessary export restrictions, and make reserves available to countries at risk of hunger, famine and malnutrition. We must keep a lid on food prices and calm the volatility in food markets.
- Mothers must be supported to access good nutrition, and to initiate and continue breastfeeding, as a priority to help protect their health and wellbeing and that of their infants.
- We call on all countries to be supported to integrate resilience, such as against food price shocks, into the Food Systems Pathways developed in 2021.
- Countries must be supported to incentive local and more diversified food production over imports, with families and farmers supported including through their re-discovery of nutritious alternatives to wheat products (for instance cassava and sorghum), including indigenous food products.
- A debt swap option for nutrition must be developed.

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## **ANNEX**

In addition to the above information, we are pleased to provide the following additional information and data as an **Annex** to this Brief.

### **UN official topline global food security key messages**

- The impact of the war is global and systemic. A perfect storm that threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries. It has led to massive increases in the prices of food, energy and fertilizers, putting even more pressure on vulnerable people and developing countries.
- As many as 1.7 billion people — one-third of whom are already living in poverty — are now highly exposed to disruptions in food, energy and finance systems.

- Russia and Ukraine together account for nearly 30% of global wheat exports and about 80% of global sunflower exports. Russia is the largest exporter of fertilizers. Wheat and maize prices have been very volatile since the war began and are still 30% higher since the start of the year.
- Shipments from Ukraine, and Russian grain deals have been put on hold, freezing an estimated 13.5 million tons of wheat and 16 million tons of maize, 23% and 43% of their expected exports in 2021/22.
- UNCTAD assesses a rapidly worsening outlook for the world economy, with the situation especially alarming for African and least developed countries. UNCTAD has downgraded its global economic growth projection for this year by 1% to 2.6%.
- WFP is calling for the re-opening of the ports in the Odesa region so that food produced in the country can flow freely to the rest of the world. Failure to open those ports will result in famine and destabilization and mass migration around the world.
- A meaningful solution to global food insecurity requires reintegrating Ukraine's agricultural production and the food and fertilizer production of Russia and Belarus into world markets.
- Food/nutrition should never be weaponized and no country in the world should be driven into famine/malnutrition and desperation.

### **UN Nutrition-specific messaging**

- As food prices rise, healthy diets become more unaffordable, particularly for the poor in low- and middle-income countries. During previous economic crises, households coped by reducing the amount or nutritious quality of food – pushing them into the malnutrition trap.
- Globally, an estimated 3 billion people cannot afford a nutritious diet and the COVID-19 crisis was estimated to add an additional 141 million people. As much as 50% of the global population may not be able to afford even half the cost of a nutritious diet.
- Calories alone are not enough. The impacts of malnutrition are less immediately visible than hunger, but left untreated, malnutrition can ultimately have multi-generational and irreversible effects on families, communities and economies. Nutritious food is the basis of a productive and healthy society.
- The global response to the food and nutrition crisis must be guided by the multisectoral and multistakeholder approach in order to break down silos between agriculture, health, nutrition and environmental sustainability. Though difficult, it is vital.

### **Country-level nutrition messaging (feedback from SUN stakeholder dialogue):**

- The now record-high prices of wheat imports are affecting local economies and the production of basic foods like bread, a key staple in both East and

West Africa. In Kenya, the SUN Focal Point reports the cost of one loaf of bread has increased by five Kenyan Shillings, resulting in an additional 150 Kenyan Shillings per month and making bread unaffordable for families.

- Decreasing availability and rising prices of imported fertilizers are putting harvests at risk. Without fertilizers, farmers are forecasting an alarming low productivity that will lead to an expected tripling of food prices in countries including Ghana the SUN Ghana focal point reports.
- To face the current food and nutrition crisis, SUN Countries are asking for support to incentives local food production over imports, with families and farmers supported in their re-discovery for nutritious alternatives to wheat products (for instance maize and sorghum), including indigenous food products.
- Food security in many areas in East and West Africa was already an issue prior to the Russia-Ukraine war. Current food systems are in fact highly vulnerable to crisis as we witnessed with the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing impact of conflict on the world economy and the realities of climate change on livelihoods, food production and frequency of natural disasters. Countries must now be supported to build resilient food systems, as shocks will continue.
- When food prices increase, poverty increases and deepens. Due to the current situation at the global level, communities across East and West Africa will be soon pushed into emergency situations to respond to a hunger crisis affecting the most vulnerable first. Increased donor funding is needed, SUN Focal Points report, to safeguard the food system and support these communities with targeted emergency food/nutrition services.
- As innovation is key to achieving healthy nutrition for all, countries should be supported on the innovation and technology front. With incentives to invest in innovative approaches, countries could start producing fertilizers locally – including organic fertilizers – and grant access to smallholders' farmers to not only increase but also improve production. Initiatives such as the “Planting for Food and Jobs” initiative in Ghana are excellent examples of innovative responses with the global solidarity objective at their core. The goal should in fact be long-term prosperity, not just survival; nutrition should be at the forefront of national agendas and not simply increased food quantity.
- Investments in nutrition are investments in the future of countries and their people. The expected disruptions in food production will result in low opportunities from the perspective of the agriculture job market, leading people to shift jobs and creating a potentially long-term negative impact on food systems. Countries to be supported to develop incentives and create new approaches for workers to stay in this sector, with a specific attention to youths and capacity building for the new generations.

## **UN messaging on maternal and child health / nutrition**

- Women suffer disproportionately, since women typically buffer the impact of food insecurity for their children, they are the first to suffer undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, and soon their children also endure the lifeline effects of malnutrition.
- Across Africa – an identified “red zone” for the global food and nutrition crisis – not a single country in the region is on course to meet the targets for anaemia in women of reproductive age (aged 15 to 49 years) – making women even more vulnerable.
- Child undernutrition is already a factor in more than three million preventable childhood deaths globally. Nutrition must be included in the global response to the food and nutrition crisis, or the lives of even more children will be put at risk.
- Globally, 45% of child mortality is due to malnutrition – this rate has the potential to rise significantly if we do not act urgently now to provide nutrition services in vulnerable countries.
- If we don’t invest now in nutrition, chronic malnutrition caused by the global food/nutrition crisis will, over time, push millions of vulnerable children across Africa and other vulnerable regions into stunting – an irreversible condition that literally stunts the physical and cognitive growth of children.
- It is important to support mothers to initiate and continue breastfeeding, as a priority to help protect their health and wellbeing and that of their infants.
- It is important to support and protect the nutritional needs of infants and young children who are not breastfed and minimize the risks they are exposed to.

## **Key supporting information**

- The number of women, men and children affected by a food and nutrition crisis in West and Central Africa is expected to reach a new record high in June 2022 - quadrupling in just three years from 10.7 million in 2019 to 41 million in 2022 - unless appropriate measures are urgently taken, reveals the Cadre Harmonisé food security analysis released in March 2022. (WFP)
- An estimated 1.8–2 million children aged 6–59 months need treatment for severe acute malnutrition in Eastern and Southern Africa every year. Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, and the United Republic of Tanzania are among the countries with a high burden of both stunting and severe acute malnutrition – while these are also on the “red list” of countries that are already feeling the impacts of the global food/nutrition crisis. (UNICEF)
- Today, women and girls make up 60% of the those around the globe with chronic malnutrition. Additionally, 29.9% of women of reproductive age (15-49 years old) suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. (GNR)

- Sub-Saharan Africa is already identified as a key “red zone” for this global food/nutrition security crisis – Some 13.7% of infants have a low weight at birth in the Africa region, while the prevalence of stunting is 30.7% - significantly higher than the global average of 22.0%. The risk of mortality is greater for those experiencing concurrent wasting and stunting. (GNR)
- Much progress could be lost unless nutrition investments continue -- For example, In Africa, now a food and nutrition crisis “red zone”, 19 countries are on course to meet wasting targets for children under 5 years of age, 6 countries are on course to meet stunting targets for children under 5 years of age, 28 countries are on course to meet the global target for overweight among children under 5 years of age, 20 countries are on course to meet exclusive breastfeeding targets for infants aged 0 to 5 months of age.(GNR)
- Drought-affected countries across the Horn of Africa are likely to be the hardest hit by impacts of the conflict - the cost of a food basket has already risen, particularly in Ethiopia (66%) and Somalia (36%) which depend heavily on wheat from Black Sea basin countries, and the disruption in imports further threatens food security. Shipping costs on some routes have doubled since January 2022. (WFP)
- In Somalia, around 1.4 million children face acute malnutrition through the end of this year, with around a quarter of them, or 330,000 children, facing severe acute malnutrition. (Joint FAO-OCHA-UNICEF-WFP statement)
- West Africa is facing the worst food security and nutrition crisis to strike the region in ten years. The nutritional situation remains particularly grave in the Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, where an estimated six million children under five are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2022. Nutritional analyses conducted across the Sahel and in Nigeria point to a crisis or emergency situation in several locations in Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria. (WFP)

With the information provided in this Brief and its Annex, the SUN Movement seeks to support SUN Countries and all SUN stakeholders with the information necessary to effectively advocate for their needs during the current global food and nutrition crisis – and to support their national crisis response and national nutrition plan.

Together, we work to **bring healthy nutrition to everyone, everywhere for the benefit of people and the planet.**

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