

KEY SUN MOVEMENT ADVOCACY MESSAGES ON COVID-19 AND NUTRITION

Why nutrition? Prioritising nutrition in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts

- **NUTRITION IS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD HEALTH:** Good nutrition is key to build immunity, protect against illness and infection, and support recovery. Efforts to preserve and promote proper nutrition, including breastfeeding, must be part of COVID-19 prevention strategies to build the resilience of individuals and communities. Healthy, balanced diets are key for boosting immunity and preventing non-communicable diseases that are risk factors for higher COVID-19 morbidity and mortality.
- **FOOD & NUTRITION SECURITY MUST BE SAFEGUARDED:** Action is needed to ensure this health crisis does not cause a food and malnutrition crisis. Protecting the poor and most vulnerable from hunger and malnutrition will be necessary for COVID-19 response efforts to succeed.
- **NUTRITION CANNOT WAIT:** Essential preventative and curative nutrition interventions must continue as even short-term disruptions could have irreversible effects on child survival, health and development. Programmes should be adapted to ensure safe and sustainable delivery.

How to do it: Priority areas for action

- **INTEGRATE NUTRITION IN COVID-19 RESPONSE & RECOVERY:** Ensure COVID-19 responses address nutrition through a holistic, multi-sectoral approach during the needs assessment, implementation and recovery, with attention to infant and young child nutrition, food security, WASH, gender equality and social protection. COVID-19 response planning and coordination should leverage existing nutrition capacity and multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination structures.
- **SUPPORT THE CAPACITY OF HEALTH SYSTEMS TO DELIVER:** Strengthen the capacity of health systems – and women and men in frontline jobs – to respond to COVID-19, while maintaining safe delivery of other vital services, including nutrition-specific interventions for women, children, and adolescents, in particular.
 - ➔ Continue essential maternal, infant and young child nutrition interventions, including early and exclusive breastfeeding, modified to comply with guidelines for infection prevention and control.
 - ➔ Work towards making essential services safe, accessible and affordable to all as a steppingstone towards universal health coverage, and plan for recovery and catch up services once the peak of the pandemic has passed.
- **PRIORITISE THE NEEDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE:** The poor and most marginalised, including refugees and internally displaced people, are more vulnerable to COVID-19 and its socio-economic consequences and must be supported to protect themselves from disease and stay resilient throughout the crisis.
 - ➔ Vulnerability factors such as poverty, inequality (also based on gender), pre-existent malnutrition, infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, crowded living conditions, poor access to healthcare and clean water and sanitation must be considered and addressed.
 - ➔ Social protection measures that protect livelihoods and safeguard the food and nutrition security of the poor are critical during quarantines and lockdowns, and beyond. This includes ensuring children receive healthy and balanced replacements for school meals while out of school.
- **SUSTAIN THE FUNCTIONING OF LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS:** Support the capacity of smallholder farmers, small and medium-sized enterprises, and local civil society organisations to continue producing and delivering affordable, adequate, safe, diverse and culturally appropriate foods.
 - ➔ Minimise the impact of lockdowns and quarantines on planting, harvesting, food processing and access to markets for both supplier and consumer.
 - ➔ Alleviate the unfair care burden for women, and prioritise support to female farmers and women-led businesses.