

A Resilient Future: Investing today to safeguard tomorrow



COVID's Impact on Malnutrition

The Standing Together for Nutrition (**ST4N**) Consortium of leading experts in the areas of nutrition, economics, health, and food systems modelled the impact on nutrition due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent impacts on economic losses and productivity.¹ Given the trajectory of the pandemic, the impact could be the “worst case” scenario modelled:

- Globally **over 250 children may die each day** in the absence of immediate action, an additional 283,000 malnutrition-related deaths in children under five and 13.6 million more children under five wasted, over 3 years. As a result, we stand to lose a decade or more of progress on nutrition.
- The **loss in economic productivity could be as high as \$44 billion dollars globally** due to the additional burden of childhood stunting and child mortality. An additional 3.6 million children may suffer life-long physical and cognitive impairments that impede their full potential.
- **Urgent investments of \$1.7 billion in additional COVID-19 response investments and actions are needed** by leaders and decision makers to protect mothers and an entire generation of children – **on top of the \$7 billion needed before the pandemic to reach SDG 2 by 2030.**

Nutrition must be at the heart of all COVID-19 pandemic immediate and long-term recovery plans by all development stakeholders.

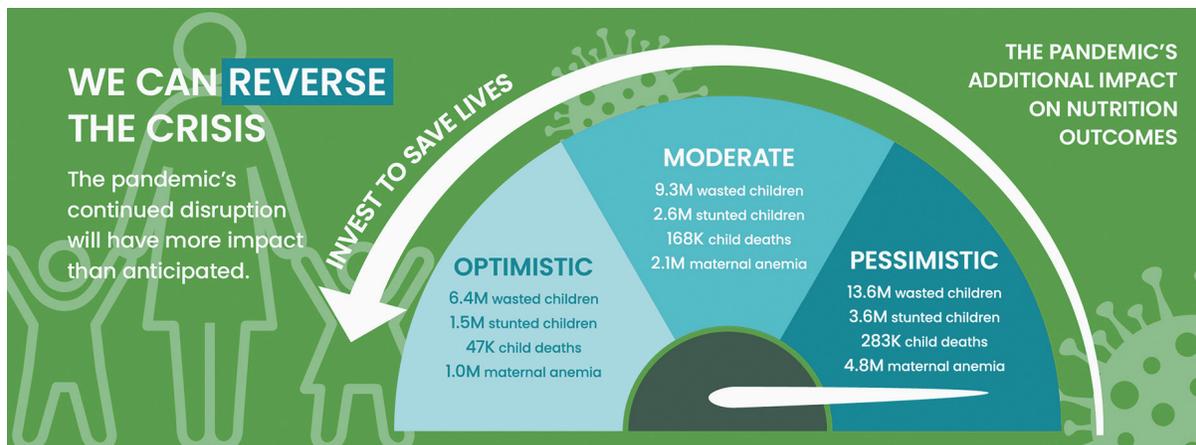
- ❑ **Increase investments and actions on nutrition in global and national COVID-19 response and recovery plans** that can be delivered through national health, food and social protection systems and platforms.
- ❑ **Integrate the continuity of nutrition services in the WHO COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan Monitoring Framework.**
- ❑ **Prioritize nutrition in the forthcoming World Bank's IDA20 Replenishment** to safeguard human capital-focused development priorities, with new nutrition-focused IDA funds committed to the Crisis Response Window and the inclusion of key nutrition indicators in the Results Framework of the Human Capital Pillar.
- ❑ **Ensure health, food and social protection systems are strengthened to address the key drivers of malnutrition and underlying structural inequalities** as part of medium- and long-term strategies to strengthen human capital with better nutrition integration.

The situation is worse than anticipated

The shocking rise of COVID-19 in recent months in many LMIC countries, particularly populous countries in South Asia with pre-existing high levels of malnutrition, is now projected to lead to a far greater rise in child deaths and malnutrition in mothers and young children than previously predicted.

¹ Osendarp, S., Akuoku, J.K., Black, R.E. *et al.* The COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate maternal and child undernutrition and child mortality in low- and middle-income countries. *Nat Food* **2**, 476–484 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00319-4>

The unfathomable impacts of the COVID-19 global crisis have already been particularly severe for the world's most vulnerable poor. Given the trajectory of the pandemic, leading international experts from the **ST4N Consortium** now project that **child malnutrition may reach the most 'pessimistic' estimated levels**. This includes an **additional 283,000 malnutrition-related deaths in children under five years over the next 3 years** or **over 250 additional child deaths per day** in the absence of immediate action.¹ Moreover, they estimate an additional 13.6 million wasted children with high risks of death, 3.6 million children with life-long physical and cognitive impairments due to stunting, and 4.8 million more women afflicted with anemia.¹



ST4N projections on the long-term productivity losses resulting from the anticipated rise in child stunting and mortality are further cause for concern for nations already reeling from the pandemic's harsh blow to national health systems and setbacks to domestic budgets.

The additional burden of childhood stunting and child mortality translates to **future productivity losses among working-age adults of close to \$44 billion under the most pessimistic scenario**.¹



Additional cases of anemia during pregnancy would result in **\$177 million in lost productivity** between 2020-2022.¹

Costs associated with the immediate impact of COVID-19 on children, as outlined by the above projections, are only one part of a much larger, complex picture. Taking into account all the other forms of malnutrition in adults and children that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, **costs from lost productivity will be far higher**.



The true long-term productivity losses are likely to be higher in light of increasing levels of overweight and obesity resulting from COVID-19's disruptions to food, economic and social systems.

Dire financial landscape for low- and middle-income countries

Nations are struggling to fund mitigation measures at the same time as needs continue to grow. Domestic financing for health in LMICs, including nutrition-specific financing, is projected to fall by 4.2% in 2021 and 2.2% in 2022, not recovering to pre-crisis levels until the end of the decade, absent V-shaped economic recoveries in LMICs.

Unfortunately, **ST4N estimates a 19% reduction in ODA to nutrition-relevant sectors through 2030** (compared to pre-COVID-19 levels) accompanied by a similar decrease in domestic health budgets.

A resilient future: invest today for a stronger tomorrow

The 2017 Global Nutrition Investment Framework estimated that approximately \$7 billion per annum is needed to reach the World Health Assembly targets for stunting, wasting, maternal anemia, and breastfeeding by 2025.² **ST4N projects additional needs of \$1.7 billion per annum to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19**.¹

² Shekar Meera, Jakub Kakiemek, Julia Dayton Eberwein and Dylan Walters. 2017. *An Investment Framework for Nutrition: Reaching the Global Targets for Stunting, Anemia, Breastfeeding, and Wasting*. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1010-7

As economies falter, the short- and long-term consequences of early childhood malnutrition demand that actors opt for more efficient use of existing resources, follow through on existing investment commitments, and advocate for additional resources to respond to this unprecedented crisis.

Call to action

Urgent actions and investments are needed by leaders and decision makers to protect mothers and an entire generation of children. Nutrition must be at the heart of all COVID-19 pandemic immediate and long-term recovery plans for all development stakeholders.

Stand Together to integrate nutrition into member state COVID-19 response and recovery

- **ST4N** calls for **urgent global and national political leadership to increase financial and policy commitments for nutrition in this critical Year of Action** at the U.N. Food Systems (September) and Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summits (December).
- **ST4N** calls for Member States **to prioritize proven and cost-effective interventions**, such as Maternal Multiple Micronutrient Supplements, Breastfeeding Promotion, Vitamin A Supplementation, Balanced Energy Supplementation, Treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition and support for improved Infant and Young Child Feeding practices.
- **ST4N supports G7 & G20 Leaders in taking forward actions that will advance progress on malnutrition**, including those outlined in the [Carbis Bay G7 Communiqué](#) (June 2021).
- **ST4N calls on Ministers of Finance to integrate specific investments in human capital in overall economic response and recovery plans** that more effectively safeguard the future productivity of nations and their people.
- **ST4N supports targeted efforts to protect vulnerable populations engaged in small and medium-sized enterprises** to ensure their recovery and future productivity.
- **ST4N** supports the global community in **driving actions on women's nutrition and empowerment by** governments, donors, philanthropy, civil society, and multilaterals:
 - Ensure that food and health systems interventions promote and enable sustainable and equitable access to healthy diverse diets and essential health and nutrition services.
 - Support global action to prevent and respond to anemia in women of reproductive age, as part of the U.N. Food Systems Summit Action Track One (Ensure Access to Safe and Nutritious Foods for All).
- **ST4N encourages businesses to better meet the needs of their consumers and work forces and ensure they have access to healthy and nutrient-rich diets:**
 - Support businesses to adopt and expand workforce nutrition commitments.
 - Ensure investors sign the Access to Nutrition Index's Investor Expectations on Nutrition, Diets and Health, which set out expectations of investors for food and beverage manufacturers and retailers.

Stand Together to integrate nutrition into the World Bank's IDA20 replenishment

ST4N calls on World Bank member states to prioritize nutrition in the forthcoming World Bank IDA20 Replenishment to safeguard human capital-focused development priorities.

- **ST4N calls for the inclusion of key nutrition indicators in the results framework of the human capital pillar and for wasting to be considered a tier one indicator.**
- **Nutrition must receive the appropriate allocation of IDA resources in the Crisis Response Window** to safeguard other development priorities.
- **ST4N recognizes the critical importance of integrating nutrition information and data systems into early warning systems and shock-responsive safety nets with a focus on women and children.** New and targeted investment is required for shock-responsive social safety nets to include nutrition specific and sensitive interventions.



The Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium (**ST4N**), formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, is a unique collaboration of over 50 leading experts in the areas of nutrition, economics, health, and food systems, representing more than 35 organizations from across the globe.