



## Celebrating the importance of nutrition

This, October 16<sup>th</sup>, marks World Food Day, a day of celebration of food, culture, and nutrition. It is an opportunity to promote worldwide awareness and action for those who suffer from malnutrition and for the need to ensure healthy diets for all. This World Food Day also marks one week since the historic moment the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) won the Nobel Peace Prize. We congratulate our friends at WFP for this well-deserved recognition and celebration of their actions, notably “as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict” (Norwegian Nobel Committee).

As the Nobel Peace Prize announcement places on hunger, malnutrition, and those fighting to defeat it in the limelight, the importance of the work of the STfN comes into sharp focus.

GAIN’s Executive Director and Standing Together for Nutrition Co-Lead, Dr. Lawrence Haddad noted:

“Hunger seeds conflict and conflict breeds hunger. This is as true today as it has been through the centuries. Incredibly, in a world that is exceedingly knowledgeable and wealthier, hunger is currently increasing and COVID-19 will exacerbate this increase. So, it is wonderful that the World Food Programme, the UN’s leading operational agency to combat hunger, is acknowledged in this wonderful way by receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. The World Food Programme, its staff, its partners, and its supporters should be extremely proud of this profound recognition of its role in promoting peace, preventing conflict, and averting hunger. GAIN is a proud partner of WFP, and we congratulate David Beasley and his leadership team and all the previous EDs for their role in building up the organisation into the powerhouse for good that it is today”.

### **The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on nutrition**

Preventing hunger has been at the forefront of WFP’s mission since its inception in 1961. COVID-19’s impacts on food systems across the globe has been a terrible reminder of how fragile our food systems are, and how vulnerable people are to the effects of malnutrition. The launch of the [Global Hunger Index](#) reminds us of the need for experts to work together to prevent the short and long-term impacts of COVID-19 and malnutrition.

[The Standing Together for Nutrition \(STfN\) consortium](#), a group of experts including colleagues from WFP, recently [published a warning](#) over the catastrophic impacts of COVID-19 on malnutrition. The consortium found that COVID-19 would drive the prevalence of moderate or severe wasting among under-fives up 14.3 percent in the absence of rapid interventions — adding an extra 6.7 million young children to this grim tally.

“The profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early life nutrition could have intergenerational consequences for child growth and development as well as life-long impacts on education, chronic disease risks and overall human capital formation,” wrote Dr. Saskia Osendarp, one of the Co-leads of the STfN.

Analysis by the STfN consortium revealed that under the worst-case scenario where the pandemic prevents young children from accessing 50 percent of their nutritional care and treatment services, nearly 180,000 young children could die: as a result, this year alone.

### **Working together to improve nutrition**

Alongside these catastrophic estimates [came a call to action by the heads of the four UN agencies](#), including WFP, 2020 Nobel Peace Prize winner, to protect children's right to nutrition in the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- Safeguarding and promoting access to nutritious, safe, and affordable diets
- Investing in improving maternal and child nutrition through pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood
- Re-activating and scaling up services for the early detection and treatment of child wasting
- Maintaining the provision of nutritious and safe school meals for vulnerable children
- Expanding social protection to safeguard access to nutritious diets and essential services

These five urgent actions were discussed in detail with decision-makers during a [UN General Assembly webinar](#) on September 24th, sponsored by the Governments of Bangladesh and Canada and hosted by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the Micronutrient Forum.

Dr. Saskia Osendarp noted, "Huge congratulations to the entire WFP team and staff on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. An important and well-deserved recognition of their relentless work to deliver food and nutrition to those in need. It feels the prize was awarded to the world, reflecting everything we stand for: We know there can't be global peace when hunger and malnutrition continue to exist. And we know that COVID-19 is an additional, unprecedented threat to hunger and malnutrition. The Micronutrient Forum is proud to collaborate with WFP and all the other partners in the Standing Together for Nutrition consortium to underline the challenges of hunger and malnutrition and find solutions to build back better. #StandingTogetherforNutrition more important than ever!"