



TWO NUTRITION DIALOGUES TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY AND PROMOTE A SUSTAINABLE, NUTRITIOUS FUTURE

Introduction

On March 27th and 28th, 2025, France hosted the Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G) in Paris. Launched in 2013 in London, N4G is a flagship international conference aimed at securing concrete political and financial commitments to combat malnutrition in all its forms.

N4G brings together governments, international organisations, philanthropies, businesses, NGOs and other key stakeholders at a global and regional level to elevate nutrition as a key development agenda and accelerate progress against malnutrition.

In preparation for the upcoming 2025 N4G Summit, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) hosted two nutrition dialogues in Pakistan to help raise awareness on the N4G Summit and mobilize public and private sector actors to help address malnutrition.

According to the article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and young people have the right to express their opinions and views to others by talking, drawing, writing or through any other medium they want to use. For this reason, the Nutrition Dialogues have included the possibility to organize Children's Workshops to encourage the active participation of children and young people in a child-friendly conversation to share perceptions, ideas and potential actions to improve children's nutrition in their community. The objective of these workshops was to support children and young people to build a shared purpose about what they want to achieve with regards to improving the nutrition in the years to come.

The Children's Workshop organised in the Punjab province of Pakistan, titled *"Little Leaders, Big Impact: Shaping the Future of Global Nutrition,"* brought forth 34 participants aged 12 to 18 years old from a diverse mix of backgrounds, spanning across rural and urban areas students from elite institutions, middle-class government schools, and scholarship recipients from disadvantaged backgrounds. The workshop provided a platform for children to discuss Pakistan's pressing nutritional challenges

1 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child#:~:text=Article%2013,media%20of%20the%20child's%20choice>



Following this, a Stakeholder Dialogue was also convened, featuring 37 participants from various sectors such as media, academia, government's representatives from the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) and the Punjab Agriculture, Food and Drug Authority (PAFDA),

food producers, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Discussions focused on three critical themes: Regulatory Compliance and Innovation, Building capacity of SMEs, and Collaboration Between SMEs and Food Regulators

Context:

Pakistan has one of the highest malnutrition burdens in the world with stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies being endemic. A case in point is the National Nutrition Survey (2018) that revealed that



42.6% of women of reproductive age were anemic,



46.9% of pregnant women were iron deficient,



81.2% of pregnant women and **62.7%** of children were deficient in vitamin D;



critical indicators for the overall physical and mental development of a country's human capital. Malnutrition is mainly attributed to poverty in Pakistan affecting **39.2%** of the population.



while **40.2%** of children under five years of age were stunted, **17.7%** were wasted and **9.5%** were overweight,



In 2021, Pakistan committed at the N4G Summit to improve household food security by **7%** by 2030 and to reduce malnutrition by **9%**,



decrease stunting in children under five years of age by 2030 (**1%** per annum),



see **13.5%** decrease in maternal and adolescent anemia by 2030 (**1.5%** per annum),



and **4.5%** decrease in wasting by 2030 (**0.5%** per annum).



10% increase in breastfeeding rate by 2030 (**1.1%** per annum)

With the **2025 N4G Summit in France in March 2025**, Pakistan is joining efforts to assess and **catalyze solutions**

from the national and international community to step-up action for better nutrition.



INSIGHT 1

Bridging Knowledge Gaps: Overcoming Misinformation and Promoting Nutrition Education

Through interactive discussions at the Nutrition dialogues, participants highlighted several challenges contributing to malnutrition, focusing on both systemic and localized issues. A key concern was the lack of awareness on nutrition, particularly in rural areas, which leads to poor dietary choices, unhealthy lifestyles, poor food hygiene, and the spread of misinformation on social media about dietary diversity.

To address these issues, participants emphasized the need for targeted nutrition educational campaigns to raise awareness about balanced diets and healthy food choices, particularly among vulnerable groups such as mothers and children in rural areas. Youth leadership was identified as a vital component, with young leaders encouraged to organize community initiatives and workshops to foster peer-to-peer advocacy and promote nutrition education. Integrating nutrition into school curriculums was

seen as an essential step to instill healthy habits from an early age, using interactive and practical approaches to engage students. Additionally, young participants highlighted the importance of promoting, at a universal level, new courses on Food System Transformation in Pakistan. Currently, no such course is available in the country, and they emphasized that integrating such educational programs would be essential in equipping future generations with the knowledge and skills to transform the food system effectively.

Participants also stressed the importance of collaboration with schools such as public and private educational institutions, and health organizations to expand outreach and ensure sustainable impact. Technology and innovation, including social media and AI tools, were identified as critical means to spread accurate and accessible nutrition information, countering misinformation.



INSIGHT 2

Nourishing Communities: Combating Food Insecurity Amid Economic and Social Barriers

Economic and social barriers, including inflation and repeated economic crises, have been identified as major contributors to food insecurity in the Pakistan. Additionally, factors such as high rates of population growth, poverty, and child labor exacerbate the problem of undernourishment, leading to widespread micronutrient deficiencies and unbalanced diets. These challenges are further compounded by inadequate availability of healthcare facilities, leaving many communities, particularly in rural areas, without access to nutritious and fortified foods, safe milk, or reliable healthcare services.

To address these pressing issues, participants emphasized a multipronged approach:

- Government intervention was identified as a cornerstone of the solution. This includes regulating food prices to make nutritious options affordable for low-income families, strengthening food safety regulations, and implementing mandatory food fortification

programs to address nutrient deficiencies. Participants also underscored the importance of promoting sustainable agricultural practices to ensure long-term food security and resilience. Healthcare and nutrition integration was highlighted as another critical area of focus. Improving healthcare services, particularly maternal nutrition programs, was seen as essential for addressing undernourishment at its root.

- The role of the private sector and NGOs was also emphasized. The participants encouraged the food industry to produce affordable, fortified products to help close the nutritional gap in the country, while NGOs and international organizations could support rural development, food supplements, and outreach programs aimed at underserved populations. Collaboration between these sectors was seen essential for creating sustainable and scalable solutions to food insecurity.



Strengthening SMEs for a Sustainable and Nutritious Future: Overcoming Barriers to Innovation and Compliance

The Stakeholder Dialogue revealed several key challenges that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face, limiting their ability to develop affordable, nutritionally-rich, and climate-resilient food products. A primary issue identified was the lack of advanced technology and insufficient collaboration between industry and academia, hindering innovation. Additionally, SMEs often lack critical knowledge in areas such as food safety, market awareness, and strategic planning, which restricts their growth and reduces their ability to reach consumers effectively. Financial constraints further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for SMEs to scale their operations. Furthermore, outdated regulations, overlapping laws, inadequate documentation systems, and inconsistent enforcement contribute to confusion and mistrust. SMEs also lack the technical expertise required to navigate complex regulatory processes, making it difficult for them to comply with both local and international food safety standards, thus limiting their competitiveness.

To address these challenges, participants proposed several solutions. A primary recommendation was to leverage technology and innovation by investing in digital tools and monitoring systems to streamline operations. Strengthening partnerships between industry

and academia was also seen as critical for driving innovation and addressing regulatory challenges effectively. Additionally, participants recommended creating training sessions focused on consumer behavior and market trends to help SMEs better understand and meet customer needs while guiding them toward sustainable growth. Mentorship programs and workshops were seen as valuable for addressing knowledge gaps in food safety, strategic planning, and market awareness. Financial support mechanisms, including subsidies, affordable credit, and tax relief, were identified as essential to alleviating operational challenges. Lastly, participants emphasized the importance of creating platforms for dialogue between SMEs and regulators to foster transparency and trust. Regular consultations, public awareness campaigns on compliance, and harmonizing regulations were seen as key to improving the regulatory environment. Recommendations also included reducing overlapping laws, digitalizing documentation, and simplifying licensing processes. Regulators were urged to align local standards with international benchmarks to enhance global competitiveness. Finally, employing technically skilled personnel was recommended to improve regulatory enforcement and support SMEs in meeting food safety standards.



Conclusion

The solutions proposed by participants in the Nutrition Dialogues serve as a powerful call to action for both public and private stakeholders to collaborate in advancing nutrition education across Pakistan. These recommendations also emphasize the need to create opportunities for improving food security and supporting the growth of SMEs in the country. By addressing these challenges and continuing the dialogue on implementing these solutions, we are confident that Pakistan can build a healthier, more nutritious, and sustainable food system for its most vulnerable populations. At the 2025 N4G Summit, experts convened to finalize Pakistan's nutrition commitments. We anticipate that these commitments will help to not only address the challenges identified during the Nutrition Dialogues but also boost accountability and reflect the innovative solutions proposed, demonstrating a tangible step forward in building a healthier and more sustainable food system.

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