



Fighting for global nutrition in an era of crises

IMPACT REPORT | 2020–2022

Acknowledgments

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More information on ST4N can be found on the [ST4N website](#).



ST4N is hosted by the [Micronutrient Forum \(MNF\)](#), a nonprofit organization and the central global platform for evidence, collaboration, and advocacy on micronutrient health. ST4N is co-hosted by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), an international organization that aims to address malnutrition in all its forms and increase access to nutritious foods in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) through sustainable solutions.

The Forum acknowledges and appreciates the leadership of Cecilia Fabrizio, DrPH, ST4N Program Lead, for her exceptional commitment and stewardship of the Consortium, as well as Bregje van Asperen, MSc, ST4N Research Associate, for her valuable contributions.

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LETTER FROM CO-COORDINATORS

Dear colleagues,

Three years ago, the COVID-19 global pandemic upended the health and livelihoods of millions of communities worldwide. As health systems stretched, economies slowed, and food systems faltered, a group of nutrition, health, gender, food, and economic experts and practitioners came together with urgency and compassion to assess how cascading crises could impact global malnutrition levels.

Aptly named the Standing Together for Nutrition (ST4N) Consortium, they set forth to address rising concerns from the international development community on the nutritional needs of vulnerable mothers and children in severely constrained contexts. As with any public health problem, they knew that data profoundly mattered to support critical policy decisions and investments.

By leveraging the depth and complimentary of their expertise and experiences, the Consortium members assessed methods and models to integrate and analyze data from health, food security, and economic systems to develop nuanced and evidence-driven projections. Together with impassioned advocates and civil society partners, they amplified policy recommendations that ensured much-needed global visibility on nutrition and helped support considerable new donor investments at the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit.

By continuing to drive evidence on nutrition across ensuing crises in the following years, including the war in Ukraine and the global food price crisis, the ST4N Consortium and its sector-wide network of supporters consistently demonstrate how *together we can go far*.

As often stated throughout history, ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances can indeed act in extraordinary ways. It is our humble honor to work with all our partners and networks who offer this extraordinary spirit.

Thank you,



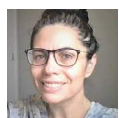
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STEERING COMMITTEE

ST4N would like to thank and acknowledge the significant contributions on the Steering Committee, who provides strategic direction, guidance, and advice to address the impact of multiple shocks and their gendered impact on nutrition for the most vulnerable.



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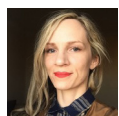
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i February 2020 until January 2023
ii April 2020 until December 2022
iii April 2020 until February 2022

SUMMARY

ST4N was established in 2020 in response to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global economic, health, and food systems. Bringing together a multidisciplinary group of experts, the ST4N Consortium focused on generating and disseminating policy-relevant evidence to safeguard food and nutrition security for vulnerable populations. By employing innovative approaches to evidence generation, knowledge mobilization, advocacy, and collaborative partnerships, ST4N has effectively bridged knowledge gaps and promoted viable solutions to mitigate the harm caused by global crises.

This report highlights the significant achievements of ST4N from 2020 to 2022. As conflicts escalated globally and food prices soared, further exacerbating the strain on the nutrition, health, and resources of vulnerable communities, ST4N played a crucial role in ensuring that nutrition remains a priority on the global policy agenda. The Consortium's work continues to highlight the impact of urgent global crises on nutrition, particularly for women and children.



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Key Highlights

- **Modeling impacts of COVID-19 on child and maternal nutrition:** In the early stages of the pandemic, ST4N focused on incorporating nutrition into pandemic mitigation strategies. By modeling the impacts of COVID-19 on child and maternal malnutrition, the Consortium developed evidence-based recommendations that became a standard reference for nutrition policy and funding. ST4N also played a crucial role in supporting advocacy, investments, policies, and programs leading up to the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit, where ST4N held a sectoral leadership role.
- **Advocating for gender-transformative policies to support women's empowerment and equity:** As the pandemic continued, ST4N developed an evidence-based analytic framework to highlight the disproportionate impacts on women's and girls' nutrition. This analysis mapped the pathways through which COVID-19 affected women and girls differently. The findings were published in a peer-reviewed journal, translated into policy recommendations, and disseminated through advocacy outreach.
- **Mitigating the impact of the war in Ukraine on global malnutrition:** When Russia invaded Ukraine, ST4N advocated for actions to mitigate the impact of the war on global malnutrition. As disruptions to major commodities upended global food systems and worsened food and nutrition insecurity, ST4N analyzed and reported on the impact of these disruptions on malnutrition, particularly for the billions of people already unable to afford a healthy diet before COVID-19 and for those still recovering from the pandemic. Collaborating with the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN), ST4N published a call to action and presented policy recommendations at key global events like the Group of 7 (G7) Summit.
- **Measuring the impact of the global food price crisis on malnutrition:** ST4N worked with partners to model the impact of food inflation on child malnutrition during the escalation of the Ukraine war. The analysis demonstrated that even a modest 5% increase in food prices raised the risk of child wasting by 9%. ST4N also developed and disseminated advocacy materials highlighting the food crisis impact on nutrition for women and girls.



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INTRODUCTION: AN ERA OF CRISES UPON CRISES FOR GLOBAL MALNUTRITION

The ST4N Consortium was established in April 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic imposed a devastating shock on economic, health, and food systems worldwide. In response to the crisis, a group of leading nutrition, gender, economic, health, and food system experts came together to estimate the potential impacts of the pandemic on the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable people and to make recommendations on how to mitigate that harm. This consortium-building effort was led by Dr. Saskia Osendarp, Executive Director, MNF and Dr. Lawrence Haddad, Executive Director, GAIN.

As crisis followed crisis—the war in Ukraine, the global increase in food prices—ST4N continued to unite the

nutrition and development sectors and draw on expertise from a range of disciplines to address the impact of these crises on malnutrition. ST4N’s work seeks to generate evidence and speak with one voice to drive investments and advocate for policies to strengthen the nutrition of vulnerable people.

Since its inception, ST4N has demonstrated how evidence can be effectively translated into powerful advocacy messages, leading to investments in mitigation responses. This report describes the Consortium’s initial activities during the pandemic and how it built on this work to support policy-relevant evidence and advocacy as the world experienced continued crises upon crises.

2020

- **MARCH WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) DECLARES COVID-19 A PANDEMIC**
- **APRIL ST4N IS FORMED**
- April **Blog post on Nutrition Connect: “Hidden Hunger and the COVID-19 Pandemic”**
- **JULY A CALL TO ACTION ISSUED BY FOUR HEADS OF UN AGENCIES: UNICEF, FAO, WFP, WHO**
- **BBC World News interview** with Saskia Osendarp
- **Comment in *The Lancet*: “Impacts of COVID-19 on Childhood Malnutrition and Nutrition-Related Mortality”**
- October **Podcast episode for *Leading Voices in Food*: “COVID-19 Disruptions to Nutrition for Mothers and Children Could Cost the World a Generation”**
- December **Presentation at N4G Virtual Launch Event: “Nutrition for Growth: Year of Action”**
- **Al Jazeera Op-ed: “COVID-19 and the Risk of Intergenerational Malnutrition”**

2021

- **NUTRITION YEAR OF ACTION**
- February **Comment in *Nature Food*: “Food Systems, Diets and Nutrition in the Wake of COVID-19”**
- June **WHO Food Systems Summit Dialogue Health Talk: “COVID-19 Recovery: Why Investing in Nutrition Cannot Wait”**
- July **Article in *Nature Food*: “The COVID-19 Crisis Will Exacerbate Maternal and Child Undernutrition and Child Mortality in Low- and Middle-Income Countries”**
- **Brief Commentary in *Nature Food*: “COVID-19 Pandemic Leads to Greater Depth of Unaffordability of Healthy and Nutrient-Adequate Diets in Low- and Middle-Income Countries”**
- **Podcast episode for *The Lancet Voice*: “Making Enough Progress on Climate Change, and Looking at COVID-19’s Effect on Malnutrition”**
- **UN Food Systems Pre-Summit Affiliated Event: “Tackling undernutrition through action and accountability: A ‘reset’ for the prevention, early detection and treatment of wasting and costing information on the consequences of stunting”**
- August **US Hill Briefing: “The Rising COVID-19 Malnutrition Crisis”**
- **Policy Brief and social media kit: “A Resilient Future: Investing Today to Safeguard Tomorrow”**
- **Bloomberg News interview** with Saskia Osendarp
- October **Presentation at Results Canada: “Taking Action to End the Malnutrition Crisis”**
- December **Sector representation: ST4N requested to lead outreach to academic sector in the run-up to the Tokyo N4G Summit**
- **Co-host and presentation at regional conference: “Delivering for Nutrition (D4N) in South Asia: Implementation Research in the Context of COVID-19”**
- **Side event at N4G Summit: “Towards a More Equal Future: The Role of Gender Equality in Ending Malnutrition by 2030”**

2022

- **FEBRUARY . . . RUSSIA INVADES UKRAINE**
- March **MNF Blog post:** “Nutrition under Siege, Again”
- **MARCH FAO’S FOOD PRICE INDEX HITS AN ALL-TIME HIGH**
- April **Comment in *Nature*:** “Act Now before Ukraine War Plunges Millions into Malnutrition”
Press release and social media kit: “The War against Ukraine and the Global Pandemic Are Creating a Global Health and Nutrition Crisis for Millions of Women and Children”
Article in *Nature Communications*: “Economic shocks predict increases in child wasting prevalence”
Briefing meetings for USAID, SDG2 Advocacy Hub, and others on impact of the Ukraine War and the resulting food crises
- May **Policy brief and social media kit:** “COVID-19 and Malnutrition: A Toxic Combination for Women”
Gender and COVID-19 Project Webinar: “Food Insecurity, Hunger, Gender, and COVID-19”
- June **Policy brief:** “Act Now before Ukraine War Plunges Millions into Malnutrition”
ST4N Knowledge Hub Launch
- October **Briefing meeting for SDG2 Advocacy Hub** on the impact of food inflation on wasting
Article in *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*: “Impact on Public Health Nutrition Services Due to COVID-19 Pandemic in India: A Scoping Review of Primary Studies on Health and Social Security Determinants Affecting the First 1000 Days of Life”
- November **Article in *Social Science and Medicine*:** “COVID-19, Nutrition, and Gender: An Evidence-Informed Approach to Gender-Responsive Policies and Programs”
Presentation of historical wasting data to SDG2 Advocacy Hub
Policy brief and social media kit: “Global Food Crisis Impact on Child Wasting in Vulnerable Communities”
Blog with SDG2 Advocacy Hub: “Tragic Impacts of the Global Food Crisis on Child Wasting: New IFPRI & ST4N Data Call for Action by G20 Leaders”
IFPRI discussion paper: “Food Inflation and Child Undernutrition in Low- and Middle-Income Countries”
- December **Open Symposium at the International Congress of Nutrition (ICN):** “Nutrition for Resilience: Ensuring Micronutrient Security in an Era of Complex Global Challenges”
MNF Blog post: “Global Food Crisis Increases Urgency to Address the Inequitable Impact of Malnutrition, Health and Poverty for Women and Girls”
IFPRI Blog post: “The global food price crisis threatens to cause a global nutrition crisis: New evidence from 1.27 million young children on the effects of inflation”

2023



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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Beyond the direct health effects, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an economic crisis and disruptions to food, health, and education systems that had serious consequences for the nutritional status of millions of people in resource-poor settings, particularly in LMIC. The containment measures governments implemented in response to the pandemic, including lockdowns, school closures, and health service disruptions, exacerbated the nutrition challenges faced by poor people, especially women and girls who experienced increased poverty and food insecurity.

Early on, the ST4N Consortium acknowledged these interrelated impacts and prepared innovative evidence to inform policy recommendations and advocate for multisectoral actions. In addition, ST4N analyzed and highlighted the disproportionate impacts of the multiple system disruptions, in conjunction with school closures, on the nutritional status of women and girls.

Generating Evidence and Sounding the Alarm on Global Malnutrition

Risks for child wasting rapidly rose: The first concern ST4N addressed was the potential risk of the pandemic to the nutritional status and survival of young children in LMIC. In their July 2020 analysis, Headey *et al.* projected that responses to the pandemic, such as lockdowns, could decrease per capita gross national income (GNI) by nearly 8% relative to pre-COVID-19 projections.² These losses in per capita GNI could increase the prevalence of moderate or severe wasting among children under five by about 14%. It also showed that an increase in wasting and a 25% reduction in coverage of nutrition and health services could lead to the devastating loss of the lives of 128,605 children under five years of age. Four Heads of UN Agencies (UNICEF, FAO, WFP, WHO) issued a Call to Action titled, "[Child malnutrition and COVID-19: the time to act is now](#)"¹ referencing the ST4N projections. Concurrently, ST4N published their main

findings in a Comment in the same Lancet issue: [“Impacts of COVID-19 on Childhood Malnutrition and Nutrition-Related Mortality”](#)² [300 citations and 6,489 engagements in social media as of June 6, 2023].

Potential consequences for child nutrition and mortality were severe: In-depth analyses conducted in July 2021 estimated the consequences of the pandemic on child malnutrition and mortality, as well as maternal anemia and undernutrition.³ ST4N experts used innovative integration of two modeling tools to estimate pessimistic, moderate, and optimistic scenarios for 2020–2022. They also estimated the cost of six nutrition interventions to mitigate the impacts on child malnutrition and mortality. The analyses showed that by 2022, COVID-19 disruptions could result in an additional 9.3 million children with wasting, 2.6 million children with stunting, 168,000 child deaths, 2.1 million maternal anemia cases, and 2.1 million children born to women with a low body mass index. Based on the stunting and child mortality projections, future productivity losses were calculated at US\$29.7 billion. Achieving global nutrition targets would require an additional US\$1.2 billion a year to scale up nutrition interventions, in addition to the previously estimated annual US\$7 billion. ST4N provided evidence-based recommendations that supported advocacy to include nutrition in efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and avert the worst-case scenarios. These analyses were published in *Nature Food*: [“The COVID-19 Crisis Will Exacerbate Maternal and Child Undernutrition and Child Mortality in Low- and Middle-Income Countries”](#)³ [28,000 views and 89 citations as of June 6, 2023].

The number of people unable to afford a healthy diet is likely to rise: Underlying the increasing malnutrition numbers was the fact that the pandemic worsened the affordability gap for healthy diets, with an estimated 50% of people unable to afford adequate healthy food compared with 43% before the pandemic.⁴ This situation was estimated to leave an additional 141 million people unable to afford a healthy diet, on top of the three billion estimated by the “2021 The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World” report. These findings were published in *Nature Food*: [“COVID-19 Pandemic Leads to Greater Depth of Unaffordability of Healthy and Nutrient-Adequate Diets in Low- and Middle-Income Countries”](#)⁴ [6,687 views and 39 citations as of June 6, 2023].

WE CAN REVERSE THE CRISIS

The pandemic’s continued disruption will have more impact than anticipated. We stand to lose a decade or more in nutrition progress and associated economic and social costs.



Country-level evidence demonstrated the importance of context when assessing impacts on nutrition: ST4N funded research on the impact of the pandemic in India and in Mexico. In India, data on the health system showed that the government was able to restore important reproductive care and infant and young child feeding services relatively quickly, which remained functioning during the third wave of COVID.⁵ In Mexico, an analysis of nutritional outcomes identified some improvements in rates of breastfeeding during the pandemic. Additionally, modeling work demonstrated the nutritional impact of restoring social protection programs and the potential cost of recommended nutritional mitigation programs. The India research was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* in the article titled, [“Impact on Public Health Nutrition Services Due to COVID-19 Pandemic in India: A Scoping Review of Primary Studies on Health and Social Security Determinants Affecting the First 1000 Days of Life”](#),⁵ with another paper forthcoming. The Mexico research appeared in policy materials and will also be published.

CONSOLIDATING AND DISSEMINATING THE EVIDENCE-BASE



A Knowledge Hub was launched in June 2022 to facilitate easy access to the evidence base supporting ST4N's scientific work. The database compiles emerging evidence on the impacts of crises on nutritional outcomes and their determinants, as well as effective measures to mitigate that burden and build resilience. Initially, the database included nutrition-related evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic shocks, as well as relevant past crises. It has since been updated to include evidence on the impact of the Ukraine war, other conflicts, and severe climate events. It also includes resources that highlight the disproportionate impacts of shocks on the nutritional well-being of women and girls.

At launch, ST4N's Knowledge Hub contained approximately 200 resources—it now contains over 330 resources, including peer-reviewed literature, reports, and articles from respected sources.

Translating Evidence into Policy and Advocacy Outreach

A call to action for decision-makers: Building on the study in *Nature Food*,³ the Consortium issued a policy brief in August 2021 titled, "A Resilient Future: Investing Today to Safeguard Tomorrow",⁷ and an accompanying social media kit. The brief highlighted the impact of the pandemic on nutrition and called for increased investments in nutrition in global and national COVID-19 response and recovery plans. It also advocated

for strengthening health, food, and social protection systems to address key drivers of malnutrition and underlying structural inequalities. ST4N also called for integrating the continuity of nutrition services in monitoring and funding mechanisms, such as WHO's COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and the World Bank's IDA20 Replenishment.



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ADVOCATING FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Responses to the pandemic caused disproportionate harm to women's and girls' nutrition

Malnutrition is both a cause and effect of gender inequality. In addition to the direct health impacts of COVID-19, government and household mitigation measures have impacted economic, educational, food, and health systems that disproportionately affect women and girls. ST4N partners developed an innovative analytic framework that illustrates how gender inequities and lack of empowerment exacerbates their health and nutrition outcomes.⁸ It showed that women's job losses were 1.8 times higher than men's during the pandemic, which negatively impacted their economic standing and ability to access food and healthcare. Additionally, women's share of unpaid work can be up to 80-90%, which means they bear the brunt of the pandemic's economic and social impacts. This research was published in *Social Science and Medicine: "COVID-19, Nutrition, and Gender: An Evidence-Based Approach to Gender-Responsive Policies and Programs"*⁸ [3 citations and 37 social media engagements as of June 6, 2023.]

Policies and programs must address gender inequities

Based on the analytic framework,⁸ ST4N advocated for comprehensive policies and programs to address the underlying gender inequities. Its key recommendations to mitigate the impact of shocks on nutrition were to (1) provide targeted financial and social protection and to support women's livelihoods; (2) expand the reach of nutrition programs to vulnerable women and girls and the need for social protection programs to integrate nutrition; (3) ensure access to continued nutrition, sexual, and reproductive health services; and (4) maintain access to school-based nutrition, education, and health services during school closures, to incentivize girls' return to school, and to avert pressures for child marriage. These messages were integrated into a gender-focused policy brief titled, "COVID-19 and Malnutrition: A Toxic Combination for Women",⁹ and an accompanying social media kit.

Women's job losses due to COVID-19 were about



1.8 x higher

than men's job losses, globally

Women's share of unpaid work can be as high as



80-90%



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AMPLIFYING EVIDENCE AND ADVOCACY MESSAGES THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND MEDIA

- **BBC interview:** In July 2020, Saskia Osendarp, ST4N Co-Coordinator and MNF Executive Director, was interviewed on BBC World News. She discussed the serious projections made by Headley et al. regarding the increase in child malnutrition and mortality due to the social and economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Podcast episode: “COVID-19 Disruptions to Nutrition for Mothers and Children Could Cost the World a Generation.”**¹⁰ In this October 2020 episode of the *Leading Voices in Food* podcast from the Duke University World Food Policy Center, the impact of COVID-19 on food systems and malnutrition among women and children was discussed.
- **Op-ed: “COVID-19 and the Risk of Intergenerational Malnutrition”.**¹¹ A December 2020, *Al Jazeera* published an op-ed highlighting the pandemic’s devastating impact on nutrition, especially for mothers, pregnant women, and children in LMIC. The article emphasized the need for investments in health, education, and productivity to prevent the reversal of years of progress on nutrition.
- **Presentation at Virtual Launch Event at the N4G: Year of Action.** In December 2020, ST4N presented its research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on malnutrition at the Nutrition Year of Action Launch Event. This event kicked off the year-long effort of building momentum for the N4G Summit in Tokyo in December 2021.
- **Dialogue on “COVID-19 Recovery: Why Investing in Nutrition Cannot Wait.”** In June 2021, ST4N participated in a WHO Food System Summit Dialogue. The discussion focused on the urgency of prioritizing nutrition in COVID-19 recovery policy to protect decades of progress in nutrition, particularly among women who have been disproportionately impacted.
- **UN Food Systems Pre-Summit affiliated event: “Tackling undernutrition through action and accountability: A ‘reset’ for the prevention, early detection and treatment of wasting and costing information on the consequences of stunting”.** In July 2021, ST4N co-hosted a parallel session during the Pre-Summit at the 2021 Food Systems Summit with MNF, The Power of Nutrition, and the Emergency Nutrition Network. The session addressed a ‘reset’ of the wasting agenda, new research on the cost of childhood stunting to businesses, and how to catalyze multisectoral action for nutrition.



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- **Podcast episode: “Making Enough Progress on Climate Change, and Looking at COVID-19’s Effect on Malnutrition.”**¹² In a July 2021 episode of the *Lancet Voice* podcast, experts discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the world’s malnutrition crisis.
- **Interview in *Bloomberg News*.** In August 2022, ST4N’s Co-Coordinator, Saskia Osendarp was interviewed by *Bloomberg News*. Dr. Osendarp highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic led to disruptions that burdened health systems, drastically reduced the availability and affordability of nutritious foods, and led to unprecedented economic and income losses, all of which created a nutrition crisis for the most poor and vulnerable.
- **US Hill Briefing: “The Rising COVID-19 Malnutrition Crisis”.** On August 10, 2021, leading organizations briefed US congressional members and staff on the malnutrition crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and on opportunities to integrate nutrition into global COVID response and recovery plans.
- **Presentation at Results Canada: “Taking Action to End the Malnutrition Crisis”.** This session in November 2021 aimed to provide dialogue for action to end the malnutrition crisis.
- **Presentation at the D4N 2021 Conference in South Asia.** Cohosted by the ST4N Consortium, this December 2021 conference highlighted effective approaches to implementing health, nutrition, and social protection programs in South Asia to improve maternal and child nutrition during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. ST4N presented work during the opening plenary titled, “Global situation analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on maternal and child health and nutrition”.



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- **N4G Summit side event.** In December 2021, a N4G Summit side event featured evidence generated by ST4N partners titled, “Towards a More Equal Future: The Role of Gender Equality in Ending Malnutrition by 2030”. This event was a forum for advocating for sustainably improving access to affordable healthy diets and investing in the nutrition security and equitable futures of vulnerable women and girls.
- **Webinar: “Food Insecurity, Hunger, Gender, and COVID-19”.** Globally, and in every region, food insecurity is more prevalent among women than men. Cecilia Fabrizio, from ST4N, participated in a May 2022 webinar on the impacts of gender and the COVID-19 pandemic on hunger and food insecurity, resulting from major disruptions to global economic, social, and food systems.
- **A call to action for the nutrition, health, and food systems communities:** This call to action urged global nutrition, health, and food systems communities to work together in assessing the scale and reach of the nutritional challenges and to articulate effective responses. It was signed by more than 680 signatories from research, academia, development, and civil society institutions from every global region.

FROM BAD TO WORSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has already sharply increased the estimated* number of children with wasting, meaning their body weight is low for their height.

Under fives with wasting



*Estimates made in 2021 by the Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium.

©nature



THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had a profound effect on global food and nutrition security, especially in LMIC dependent on imports. The conflict has caused food prices to soar and reduced the availability of food, fuel, and fertilizer, compounding the already disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vulnerable communities were hit hardest, with efforts to mitigate acute food insecurity and to prevent and treat malnutrition compromised. Health and nutrition budgets were also reallocated, with potential lifelong impacts on women and children.

ST4N and MNF called attention to the need to prevent a malnutrition crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine and its impacts on the affordability and availability of nutrient-rich foods in a blog post "[Nutrition under Siege, Again](#)".¹³ ST4N generated policy-relevant evidence on the impacts of the overlapping crises to advocate for action to help protect the nutrition and food security of current and future generations. The Consortium synthesized the probable impacts on malnutrition, particularly for those already struggling to recover from the pandemic.

Translating Evidence into Policy and Advocacy Outreach

A call to action for global leaders: As during the pandemic, the first task was to assess the probable impacts of the war, and its disruption of global food supplies, on malnutrition, particularly for those countries, populations, and households already struggling to recover from the pandemic. The unprecedented global rise in food, fuel, and fertilizer prices would likely jeopardize the nutritional status and health of women and children, already weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate events, and other conflicts. In April 2022, ST4N and SUN published a call to action¹⁴ to urge international leaders, donors, and national governments to prevent acute food insecurity and to protect current and future generations from malnutrition by taking the following five urgent actions: (1) reduce unnecessary trade restrictions and allow greater accessibility of essential nutritious foods; (2) implement safety net programs to improve nutrition; (3) protect national nutrition budgets and essential nutrition services for women and children; (4) honor financing commitments to nutrition;

CRISIS UPON CRISES WILL EXACERBATE MALNUTRITION IN MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

UKRAINE CRISIS: RISING GLOBAL FOOD, FUEL, AND FERTILIZER PRICES

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CLIMATE SHOCKS

ONGOING CONFLICTS



GLOBAL MALNUTRITION



REDUCED
PHYSICAL GROWTH



POOR BRAIN
DEVELOPMENT



IMPAIRED HEALTH
& SURVIVAL



REDUCED
HUMAN CAPITAL



and (5) strengthen data-monitoring systems to better target interventions. This research was published in *Nature* in the article titled, “Act Now before Ukraine War Plunges Millions into Malnutrition”,¹⁴ and amplified by a press release, “The war against Ukraine and the global pandemic are creating a global health and nutrition crisis for millions of women and children”.

Calling for life-saving investments: In June 2022, a policy brief by ST4N called upon governments, donors, and funders to take immediate action to protect current and future generations from the devastating effects of maternal and child malnutrition in a context of crises upon crises. It called on G7 leaders to (1) make immediate investments to save lives through health systems targeting the most vulnerable populations; (2) prevent a rise in all forms of malnutrition by designing social protection programs that facilitate women’s and children’s access to nutritious foods and nutrition and health services; and (3) accelerate food systems transformation to improve the availability and affordability of nutritious foods. The policy brief, “Act Now before Ukraine War Plunges Millions into Malnutrition”,¹⁵ and accompanying social media kit were disseminated widely to partners.



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THE GLOBAL FOOD PRICE CRISIS

In 2022, the succession of crises that disrupted global economic, social, and food systems led to a global food price crisis, and the global nutrition community reached out to ST4N for evidence and policy recommendations.

Generating Evidence and Sounding the Alarm on Global Malnutrition



Food inflation has outsized impacts on child wasting: Not much is known of the impact of global inflationary food prices on child malnutrition. To address this gap, ST4N developed a model to analyze the historical impact to support policy recommendations for mitigation. Drawing on data from

130 Demographic Health Surveys conducted in 44 countries between 2000 to 2021, the research showed that, on average, a 5% increase in the real price of food increases the risk of wasting by 9%.¹⁶ The most vulnerable are low-income households and rural children, especially those who live in households without land. This research was published a *Nature Communications* article in April 2022 titled, “Economic shocks predict increases in child wasting prevalence”¹⁶ and in November 2022 in an IFPRI Discussion Paper, “Food Inflation and Child Undernutrition in Low and Middle Income Countries”.¹⁷

Translating Evidence into Policy and Advocacy Outreach

Briefing meetings were held for USAID, SDG2 Advocacy Hub and others to share policy-relevant evidence and messaging on the impact of the Ukraine war and the resulting food crises in April 2022. ST4N’s work on the global food crisis was amplified by [SDG2 Advocacy Hub’s Hungry for Action Campaign](#) to target the UN General Assembly, COP27 and G7 in September 2022. Additionally, ST4N’s partner, IFPRI, presented to the SDG2 Advocacy Hub on the food crises impact on the nutritional status of women and children.



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Humanitarian action is needed to aid mothers and children facing crisis:

In a November 2022, ST4N partners called for scaling up humanitarian assistance to extend health and nutrition aid to mothers and children facing food crises, strengthening health and social protection systems, improving the accessibility and affordability of nutrient-rich foods through investments and actions, and prioritizing the collection and analysis of nutrition data to ensure that policies and actions are aligned with the nutrition needs of vulnerable population. A policy brief titled, “[Global Food Crisis Impact on Child Wasting in Vulnerable Communities](#)”,¹⁸ and accompanying [social media kit](#) were produced.

Blogs highlighting the impact of global crises on malnutrition:

- In November 2021, ST4N co-authored the blog “[Tragic Impacts of the Global Food Crisis on Child Wasting: New IFPRI & ST4N Data Call for Action by G20 Leaders](#)”.¹⁹ This blog presents the IFPRI-ST4N research on the impacts of the global food crisis on nutrition and advocates for the policy asks of the SDG2 Advocacy Hungry for Action Campaign.
- IFPRI published a research blog in December 2022, “[The global food price crisis threatens to cause a global nutrition crisis: New evidence from 1.27 million young children on the effects of inflation](#)”,²⁰ which discusses the IFPRI-ST4N paper on the global food crisis.
- In December 2022, ST4N built on a framework for analyzing the disparate impact of global crises on women and girls. The blog, “[Global Food Crisis Increases Urgency to Address the Inequitable Impact of Malnutrition, Health and Poverty for Women and Girls](#)”,²¹ highlighted the effect of the food crisis, the gender gap in nutrition, and advocated for gender-responsive policies and programs.

ST4N AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NUTRITION

At the December 2022 ICN held in Tokyo, Japan, ST4N participated in MNF's open symposium called "Nutrition for Resilience: Ensuring Micronutrient Security in an Era of Complex Global Challenges", which highlighted the role of micronutrient security in strengthening population resilience in the face of complex challenges to nutrition.

An ST4N member served as a panelist with the presentation, "Learning in Crisis: Gathering Recent Evidence to Inform Resilient Micronutrient Policies". The presentation addressed the multiple shocks experienced since 2020 (COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, climate events, and global food crisis) and the ongoing efforts of the ST4N Consortium and UN partners to offer evidence-based recommendations for global and national policymakers.



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DRIVING GLOBAL ADVOCACY AND INVESTMENTS IN NUTRITION

ST4N's key success factor has been its consistent generation of policy-relevant evidence, which has united the nutrition sector around the key results and messages based on that evidence. By advocating with one voice for policies and funding to mitigate the impact of the multiple crises, particularly on women, girls, and children, ST4N and its partners have led to demonstrable large investments in nutrition. The Consortium's advocacy efforts include developing readily adaptable advocacy materials, strengthening messaging through the advocacy community, providing knowledge leadership through media and events, and playing a leadership role at the N4G Summit.

DRIVING INVESTMENTS IN NUTRITION

ST4N's evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on nutrition and the corresponding evidence-based recommendations were cited in the following documentation for major nutrition funding commitments during the 2021 Year of Nutrition, culminating in the N4G Summit.

International Development Agency:
US\$93 billion IDA20 Replenishment

US government (White House and USAID):
US\$11 billion to combat malnutrition, announced at the 2021 N4G Summit

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation:
US\$922 million nutrition commitment

Canadian government (Global Affairs Canada):
C\$520 million to nutrition-specific funding over five years, pledged at launch of N4G Year of Action

KEY PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITES CITING ST4N-GENERATED EVIDENCE

- **Reports** by United Nations (UN) agencies and other key organizations
 - The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2021²² and 2022²³ reports by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
 - “The Joint Malnutrition Estimates 2021”²⁴ report by the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), WHO, and the World Bank
 - The “Global Food Policy Report 2021”²⁵ by IFPRI
 - The “Fed to Fail? 2021 Child Nutrition Report”²⁶ by UNICEF
 - An analytic framework on COVID and nutrition by UNICEF, USAID, WHO.²⁷
- **Governmental communications** including from Global Affairs Canada, USAID ([COVID-19 response fact sheet](#), [Multi-sectoral Nutrition Resource Review](#), [media interviews](#), [report to Congress](#), [US Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2021-2026](#)), a [UK parliament briefing](#) by GAIN, and websites from The European Commission on [“Knowledge for Policy”](#) and [New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)
- **Publications from foundations** including a [white paper](#) from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and a [global health policy fact sheet](#) by the Kaiser family Foundation
- **Conference materials** from the N4G Summit ([press release](#), [side-events page](#), [launch event recap](#), [social media key messages](#), [advocacy engagement pack](#), [advocacy tool kit](#)) and the D4N South Asia conference ([summary report](#))
- **Publications and websites from global development banks**, including the [World Bank](#) and [Inter-American Development Bank](#)
- **Online articles by organizations and institutions** including UNICEF, IFPRI, GAIN, Exemplars in Global Health, the Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Food Fortification Initiative, and the UN affiliated UnitLife
- **Advocacy materials from many civil society organizations**, including [Save the Children](#), [Scaling Up Nutrition \(SUN\)](#), the [Power of Nutrition](#), [SDG2 Advocacy Hub](#), [Thousand Days](#), [Results Canada](#), and the [Alliance to End Hunger](#)
- **Online news articles** by ABC News, Bloomberg, Devex, ReliefWeb, Health Affairs, Borgen Magazine, Globe Newswire, MSN, and other news outlets from the US, Colombia, India, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, Finland, and Spain

LOOKING AHEAD

The cascading global crises of the past few years—the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, and the global food price crisis—suggest we are in an era where crises are unfortunately the new norm. ST4N will continue to play a leading role in the nutrition community by generating and synthesizing evidence and advocating for effective policy solutions with a united voice, particularly due to the accelerating impact of climate change on nutritional status. ST4N will also continue to promote multisectoral actions and gender-responsive policies and programs to address the inequitable impact of malnutrition, health, and poverty on women and girls.

Currently, ST4N is partnering with UN agencies to develop a policy report that takes a systems approach to nutrition resilience. The report will summarize what the nutrition sector knows about the impacts of the shocks of the past three years (pandemic, climate events, and conflict) on nutrition outcomes. It will also highlight case studies of country systems (food, health, education, and social protection) that facilitate nutrition resilience, and offer recommendations for global and country decision-makers to support nutrition resilience.



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ST4N would like to thank and acknowledge the important contributions of the Working Groups, who created policy-relevant evidence, published it in high-impact journals, translated evidence into policy messaging, and amplified dissemination efforts.

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