

PRESS RELEASE



Canada backs greater gender equality in nutrition response to COVID-19

When a crisis hits, women and girls often suffer undue hardship while taking on a double burden of additional care of their children, families, and communities. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. Today the Government of Canada, announced it is taking action to explore how the pandemic and efforts to control the outbreaks have impacted populations, especially vulnerable groups such as women and girls.

At the [Nutrition for Growth Year of Action Launch](#), the Government of Canada announced a commitment of \$520 million for nutrition-specific investments. This included over \$1 million in funding to the [Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium](#), a multidisciplinary group of over 50 nutrition, economics, food, and health system experts across the world working collectively to address the scale and reach of the COVID-related nutrition crises.

The Consortium will convene leading gender, nutrition, and modeling experts to research pathways to gender disparities in nutritional outcomes, such as COVID's impact on women's empowerment and agency and the subsequent impact on childcare practices. Historically, the impact of crises on women's empowerment has affected their ability to feed their families nutritious foods and seek adequate care for themselves and their children, potentially leading to increased maternal and child malnutrition. This work will enable governments to develop equitable COVID- response policies.

"To date, the pandemic has potentially erased over a decade of progress in reducing malnutrition in all its forms. It is vital to understand how the pandemic has disproportionately impacted women and girls so that governments can design policy responses to mitigate these devastating effects. We are pleased to support this project, which is part of our long-term commitment to promoting gender equality." Karina Gould, Canada's Minister of International Development.

We applaud the Government of Canada in their commitment to women and girls. This funding comes at a critical time; with the acceleration of the pandemic in many lower-and-middle income countries (LMIC) settings in 2021, the Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium fears that the impacts on maternal and child malnutrition may be even more devastating than anticipated last year. In the most populous countries the COVID-19 situation is dire and the impact will be closer to the most pessimistic scenario, with potentially an additional 13.6 million wasted children, 3.6 million stunted children, and 283,000 child deaths by 2022," states Dr. Saskia Osendarp, Micronutrient Forum & Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium.

This research and recommendations will be timely as global organizations and nations are engaged in the N4G Year of Action, culminating in the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021 and the Tokyo N4G Summit at the end of this year.

"Understanding how the pandemic disproportionately impacts women and girls is crucial for decision-makers to mitigate the inter-generational impact of malnutrition on health and poverty. This funding can support evidence to generate stronger policies to support women and girls' nutrition," describes Lawrence Haddad, GAIN and Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium.

Standing Together for Nutrition will host an event on Tuesday, 8 June, as part of the WHO Food Systems Summit Dialogues- Health Talks: “COVID-19 recovery; *Why investments in nutrition can’t wait*”. Registration is open [here](#).

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Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium

Standing Together for Nutrition was created to bring together experts from the food system, health, and nutrition sectors to assess the impact of COVID-19 on nutrition status; model projections for the acute, recovery, and long-term phases of the pandemic; and identify recommendations to mitigate the damage. Together, this unique collaboration has published their conclusions in leading journals such as [The Lancet](#) and [Nature Food](#) and further support improved nutrition policy. For additional information, visit standingtogetherfornutrition.org.

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