

Concept article – Notes.**Nutrition for Growth 2025: A Global Commitment to Ending Malnutrition**

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Published: 15 April 2025

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Abstract

The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit, held in Paris on March 27–28, 2025, marked a critical moment in the global fight against malnutrition. Hosted by the French government in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international stakeholders, the summit brought together diverse actors to mobilize political, financial, and technical commitments addressing undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity. This article synthesizes the objectives, themes, statistical context, and outcomes of the summit, emphasizing the urgency of coordinated action and accountability. A new spotlight on malnutrition in crisis zones including Ukraine and Gaza, and the economic case for investing in the nutrition of women and girls, as emphasized by UNICEF, also brought attention to populations in acute humanitarian need. Drawing from recent data and prior summits, we explore the Paris summit's potential to reshape global nutrition policy and accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

Keywords: Malnutrition, Food Security, Sustainable Development, Global Health, Investment in Nutrition, N4G Summit 2025

Introduction

Malnutrition remains a severe global challenge undermining public health, economic development, and social equity. In 2023, an estimated 735 million people were undernourished, while 148 million children were stunted and 45 million suffered from wasting (FAO et al., 2024). Meanwhile, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) continue to rise, creating a “double burden” of malnutrition (WHO, 2024). Women and children are disproportionately affected, with acute malnutrition in pregnant and breastfeeding women increasing by 25% since 2020 in the worst-affected countries (WHO, 2024).

The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) initiative, launched in 2013, has become a cornerstone for mobilising global nutrition commitments. The 2025 summit in Paris coincides with the end of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), offering a platform to reinforce global collaboration and accountability in advancing nutrition and food security.

Among its many priorities, this year's summit highlighted the worsening nutrition crises in conflict zones like Ukraine and Gaza, demonstrating how armed conflicts exacerbate food insecurity and undernutrition (International Partnerships, 2025), thus, highlighting the need for stronger humanitarian-nutrition integration at the summit and beyond..

Objectives and Themes of the Paris Summit

The 2025 N4G Summit was structured around five thematic pillars, aligning nutrition goals with broader sustainable development efforts:

- **Sustainable Food Systems:** Promoting equitable access to nutritious foods while addressing climate adaptation and biodiversity (GAIN, 2025).
- **Public–Private Collaboration:** Encouraging responsible engagement from the private sector in nutrition strategies.
- **Gender & Nutrition Equity:** Prioritizing interventions for women, adolescent girls, and children.
- **Economic Investment in Nutrition:** Emphasizing the high return on investment (ROI) of nutrition-related policies.
- **Global Policy Alignment:** Integrating nutrition into UN, G20, and national development frameworks (FAO, 2025; Nutrition for Growth, 2024).

A unique feature of the summit was the "troika" model, linking Tokyo 2021 (past), Paris 2025 (present), and Los Angeles 2028 (future) to ensure continuity across N4G efforts (WHO, 2024).

Statistical and Economic Context

The scale of the malnutrition crisis demands urgent and sustained action. WHO (2024) estimates that malnutrition contributes to 45% of deaths in children under five—about 3 million annually. The World Bank (2024) reports that every dollar invested in nutrition yields \$16 in economic returns, yet a \$13 billion annual funding gap remains.

From a macroeconomic perspective, GAIN (2025) indicates that every \$100 million invested in nutrition can increase global GDP by \$1.6 billion. The economic costs of inaction—lower productivity, higher

healthcare burdens, and stunted development—underscore the need for nutrition-centered economic policies (FAO, 2025).

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell highlighted the significant economic benefits of investing in women's and girls' nutrition. She noted that the World Bank estimates such investments could boost economic productivity in low- and middle-income countries by \$110 billion. Furthermore, every dollar invested in reducing anemia in women could yield \$12 in economic returns. Russell emphasized that improving nutrition for women and girls is not only a moral imperative but also a sound investment in the future, unlocking a "double dividend" of mutually reinforcing benefits (UNICEF, 2025).

Key Commitments and Innovations

Financial Pledges and Policy Commitments

The Paris summit reportedly surpassed the \$27 billion in pledges secured at the Tokyo 2021 summit, though official figures await confirmation (WHO, 2025). Financial support came from governments, philanthropic institutions, and private sector partners.

Pledges included:

- National commitments to expand nutrition-sensitive social protection programs.
- Increased funding for AI-enabled monitoring of food systems.
- Expansion of maternal and child health services through nutrition–health integration (GAIN, 2025).

Innovations and Partnerships

The “N4G Village of Solutions” featured grassroots projects and technological innovations. Companies such as Galaxy Foods and Hunza Food Processing demonstrated sustainable approaches to fortifying staple foods and reducing ultra-processed food consumption (GAIN, 2025).

The Private Sector Working Group, co-led by GAIN and the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNI), promoted SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) commitments, aiming to regulate industry practices that contribute to malnutrition (GAIN, 2024; Action Contre la Faim, 2024).

Spotlight on Crisis Zones

A dedicated session at the summit focused on the intersection of conflict and malnutrition in humanitarian settings. Representatives from UN agencies and NGOs presented alarming statistics and first-hand accounts from Ukraine, Gaza and a number of crisis zones, where ongoing conflicts have decimated

food systems and obstructed humanitarian access. In Gaza, over 50% of the population now faces acute food insecurity, with child wasting rates exceeding emergency thresholds (FAO, 2025). Internal displacement crisis such as in Sudan has left millions without access to safe water or sufficient food, while in Ukraine, infrastructure damage and displacement have disrupted nutrition services (WHO, 2025).

While the core focus of the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2025 was on global nutrition challenges and securing commitments to address malnutrition in all its forms, research in the subject indicate that the specific situations in Ukraine and Gaza were considered within the broader context of the summit.

Ukraine: Team Europe, in its pledge of €6.5 billion, highlighted its commitment to ensuring inclusive gender-responsive and equitable nutrition ecosystems prevail in partner countries, explicitly mentioning Ukraine alongside other regions facing conflict and fragility like the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. This indicates that the nutritional vulnerabilities arising from the situation in Ukraine were a concern and part of the European Union's response framework discussed at the summit. Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) listed Ukraine among the regions for which it provides the "Latest" information on health emergencies, suggesting the nutritional aspects of the crisis were being monitored (International Partnerships, 2025).

Gaza: Slovenia, as part of Team Europe, specifically announced its intention to commit €0.5 million, stating that these efforts would be enhanced by supporting multilateral partners, notably UNICEF and WFP, in helping fight malnutrition in Gaza. This demonstrates a direct commitment to addressing the nutritional needs in the context of the humanitarian situation there (International Partnerships, 2025).

These examples were used to call for stronger integration of emergency nutrition responses in conflict zones within long-term development strategies. Delegates advocated for the protection of humanitarian corridors, increased donor flexibility, and the inclusion of conflict sensitivity in all nutrition investments (Action Contre la Faim, 2024).

Accountability and Future Directions

While the scale of commitments is encouraging, historical precedent warns of implementation gaps. The Global Nutrition Report (2018) found that while most 2013 summit pledges were fulfilled by 2020, weak governance structures in fragile states hampered program execution.

The Paris summit introduced enhanced accountability mechanisms, including:

- The Nutrition Accountability Framework, which ties national targets to monitoring systems.

- Thematic working groups tasked with generating annual progress reports.
- Recommendations to integrate nutrition into national climate adaptation plans (GAIN, 2024).

Going forward, researchers and policy makers must track outcomes rigorously to ensure the summit's promises lead to real change.

Conclusion

The Nutrition for Growth Summit 2025 reaffirmed the international community's resolve to combat malnutrition in all its forms. By placing nutrition at the heart of sustainable development and emphasizing accountability, the summit has the potential to catalyse transformative global progress. The pledges—surpassing \$27 billion—are a strong signal of support, but true success depends on translating them into sustainable, inclusive action.

Importantly, the summit's recognition of malnutrition in crisis zones such as Ukraine and Gaza elevated the urgency of reaching populations facing acute humanitarian distress. These conflicts underscore the need for flexible, inclusive, and conflict-aware nutrition programming that bridges emergency and development divides. In addition, the economic case for prioritizing women's and girls' nutrition, advocated strongly by UNICEF, underscores the dual benefits of such investment for equity and national prosperity.

As the curtain falls on the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the Paris summit may prove to be a defining moment—provided that resources reach the most vulnerable and systemic drivers of malnutrition are addressed.

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