



***United Nations Conference on Climate Change  
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SCN statement***

**Implications of climate change on undernutrition**

Today, the number of people suffering from poverty and hunger exceeds 1 billion. Over 19 million children face hunger-related death at any given moment in time, and only 3% of these children currently receive treatment. The failure to put in place measures for malnourished children results in the deaths of 7 children every minute. The impacts of the food price crisis, followed by the financial and economic crisis, on increased hunger and undernutrition have challenged the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG1, Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger), and are likely to have repercussions on other MDGs, especially on maternal health and child mortality (MDGs 4 and 5).

Undernutrition is caused by inadequate dietary intake and disease, which stem from insufficient food, poor maternal and child care practices and inadequate access to clean drinking water, safe sanitation and health - all of which are directly affected by climate change:

- Climate change increases the incidence and severity of extreme weather events and magnifies the risk of disasters everywhere, which affect both rural and urban livelihoods and accelerate population displacement.
- Climate change poses a major threat to agriculture and food security in the 21st century: it will affect food availability, accessibility, stability, and utilisation.
- Climate change also constitutes a major health threat, and already contributes to the global burden of disease and premature death.
- Hundred of millions of people are at risk of being exposed to increased water stress. It will increase the burden of water-related diseases.
- Climate change will put further strain on women, compromising their ability to provide proper care to infants.

It is the poorest that would be the hardest hit, particularly young children. Further, many families with undernourished children do not have the means and capacity to adapt or cope with the multiple threats of climate change.

The Standing Committee on Nutrition urgently calls upon all governments, United Nations Organisations, donors, Non-Governmental Organisations, academic institutions, and civil society organisations to:



- (1) Join forces in advocating for greater political commitment, resource allocation and accountability to counter the harmful effects of climate change on the achievement of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Millennium Development Goals.
- (2) Ensure that negotiations on climate change adaptation in the frame of UNFCCC aim at protecting and promoting nutrition through appropriate support to livelihoods, agriculture, health, water and natural resource management.
- (3) Develop a knowledge base to inform future programming on climate change and nutrition. Priority should be given to understanding and documenting the impacts of climate change on nutrition in representative eco-systems; setting up a comprehensive nutrition surveillance system; identifying, validating and costing the set of interventions required to protect nutrition from climate-related hazards and climate change, and capitalizing on lessons learnt through experience.
- (4) Scale up interventions that successfully reduce the impacts of climate change on nutrition and enable people to adapt by increasing community resilience to climate change, thereby protecting people at risk of undernutrition and promoting healthy nutrition and sustainable diets.
- (5) Ensure that climate change mitigation actions will not undermine the ability of poor people to feed themselves and access adequate public health, noting that all countries need to contribute to take action on this mitigation.
- (6) Prioritize action for countries that are the most affected by undernutrition and climate change, targeting the most vulnerable people in these countries, particularly pregnant and nursing women and infants.
- (7) Take action and provide immediate funding for climate adaptation to build capacity and strengthen existing sector-based mechanisms that will be required to deliver adaptation programs.

Managing the impacts of climate change will require developing comprehensive and multisectoral programming for the identification, treatment and prevention of undernutrition. This will require collaboration across all sectors by governments, United Nations, donors, civil society and academia at regional, national and local levels.

We must build upon the mobilisation of the international community in response to the food and economic crises, and accelerating climate change. It is time to build bridges across the biological, environmental, social and economic dimensions and sectors and to develop synergies and alliances to ensure that political will, financial resources and human efforts are optimised through integrated and collaborative action. Human rights, and in particular the right to adequate food, the right to health and the right to water must guide us as we revisit our approach to development and address the failures of a system which is no longer sustainable.