

WORLD VISION'S CHILD-CENTRED FOOD SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

Purpose

This framework sets out how food systems shape child nutrition outcomes and what World Vision does – through programming, evidence and advocacy – to drive child-centred food systems transformation. It is designed as a practical reference for field offices, aligned with the ENOUGH Food Systems E-Course, to support consistent understanding and coordinated action across the organisation.

AT A GLANCE

Key messages

- Child hunger and malnutrition are predictable and preventable outcomes of food systems that fail to deliver safe, diverse and affordable diets, rather than simply a result of insufficient global food production
- Food systems shape children's nutrition through five interconnected domains: *production and livelihoods; market systems; food environments, consumption and waste; governance and policy coherence; and private sector practices*
- Children in [fragile and conflict-affected settings](#) face the greatest risks, as shocks to markets, incomes and services compound underlying vulnerabilities
- Ending child hunger requires food systems transformation that is sustainable, nutrition-sensitive and equitable. This requires deliberately centring children's needs at every level
- World Vision connects field evidence to advocacy, using programme experience to influence the policies, financing and accountability mechanisms that determine what children eat.

SECTION 1

Why a child lens is critical to food systems transformation

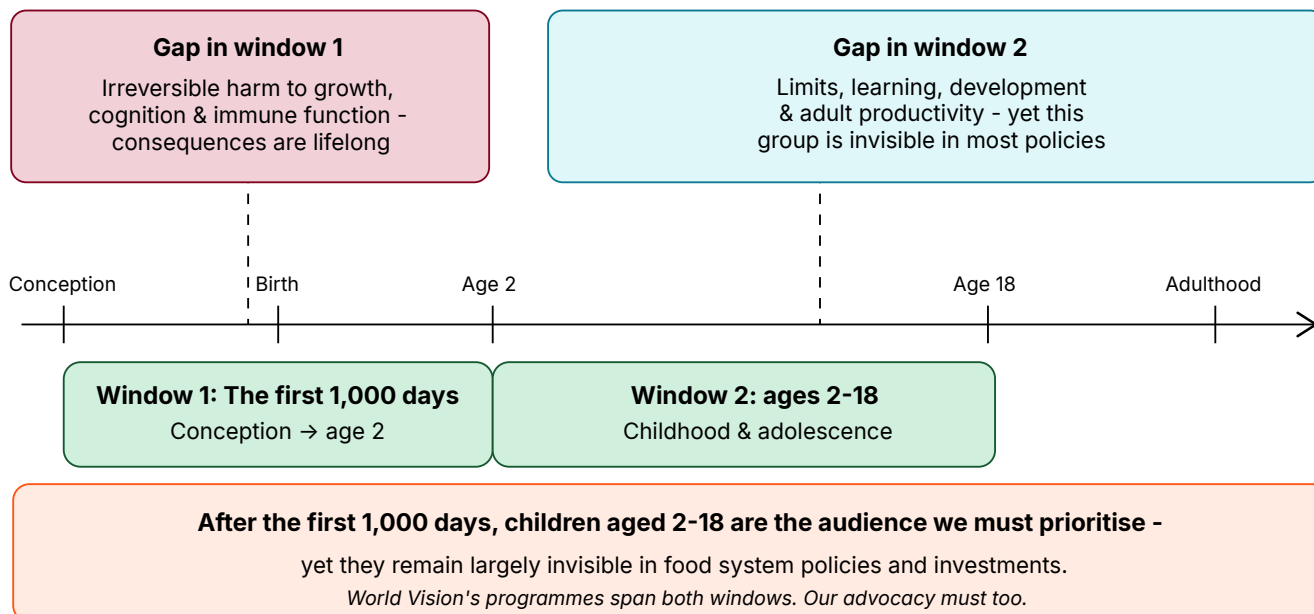


Figure 1: The two critical windows of childhood nutrition

Food systems encompass the full network of actors, activities, and conditions involved in producing, processing, distributing, marketing, consuming and disposing of food. These systems both reflect and reinforce the political, social, economic and environmental conditions that shape what children eat and whether they thrive.

Current food systems are failing children, not because the world produces too little food, but because too many children and their families cannot access or afford healthy diets.¹

Children bear a disproportionate burden of hunger and malnutrition. The first 1,000 days of life, from conception to a child's second birthday, are a period of peak nutritional need. Even brief episodes of inadequate diet during this window can cause irreversible harm to growth, cognitive development and immune function, with consequences lasting a lifetime.

However, children's nutritional needs do not end after early childhood. Pre-adolescence and adolescence represent a second critical window of growth and development, marked by rapid physical, cognitive and emotional changes.

Adequate nutrition and care during this stage are essential to support healthy development, learning outcomes and a more resilient transition into adulthood. When nutrition needs are not met across childhood and adolescence, the consequences can be lifelong, limiting potential and undermining broader social and economic development.

The risks are greatest in [fragile and conflict-affected settings](#), where market disruption, collapsing household incomes, conflict and displacement rapidly undermine food security. In these contexts, caregivers may resort to negative coping strategies: skipping meals, withdrawing children from school, or relying on cheaper, less nutritious foods.

Ending child hunger and malnutrition requires food systems that are

- **Sustainable:** Resilient to climate and economic shocks
- **Nutrition-sensitive:** Designed to improve diet quality, not just caloric supply
- **Equitable:** Ensuring the most vulnerable children are reached first.

¹ A healthy diet, according to FAO and WHO, is a diverse, balanced, adequate, and moderate dietary pattern that provides all essential nutrients, supports health and wellbeing throughout life, and helps prevent all forms of malnutrition and diet-related diseases. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240101876>

SECTION 2

Five domains: How food systems shape child nutrition outcomes

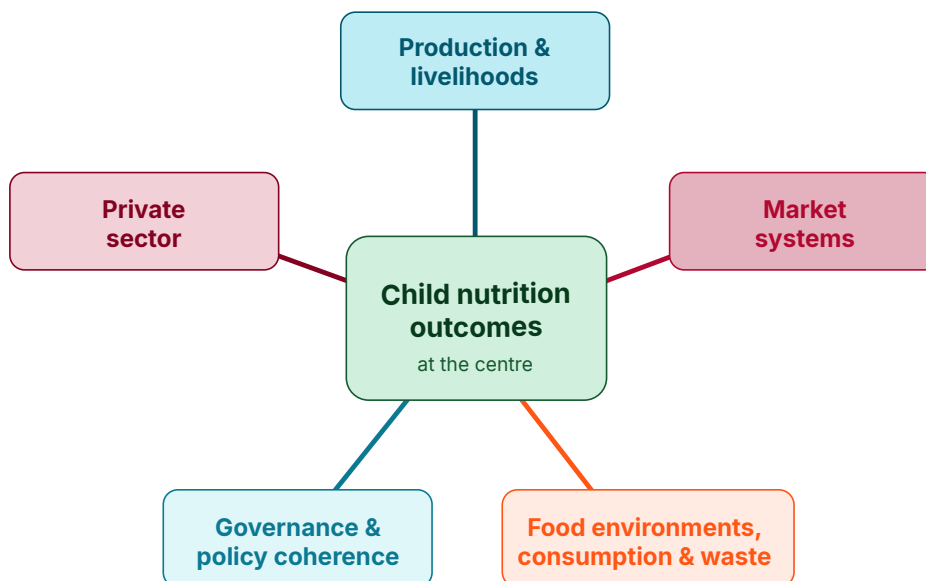


Figure 2: Five interconnected domains

Child nutrition outcomes are shaped by five interconnected domains. Weaknesses in any one of these domains compound vulnerabilities in the others. World Vision's integrated approach addresses all five simultaneously, through programming and advocacy.

2.1 Production systems and livelihoods

What families can grow and earn directly shapes what children eat. When agricultural systems favour a narrow range of calorie-dense staples over diverse, nutritious foods, children's diets suffer. Climate shocks, land degradation and income instability compound this risk – forcing families to reduce meal frequency, withdraw children from school, or sell productive assets to survive.

Women's role is central: when women control income and agricultural decisions, household spending on children's food, health and education improves. Financial resilience – through savings, credit, insurance and income diversification – is equally critical to stabilising

purchasing power across seasons and during periods of disruption.

What World Vision does

- Promotes climate-resilient and diversified agriculture to stabilise food production and diet quality
- Supports land restoration and greening to recover soil fertility and increase availability of legumes, vegetables and fruits
- Strengthens women's economic participation and financial inclusion through savings groups, credit and insurance (Savings for Transformation, VisionFund)
- Delivers integrated livelihoods programming: Ultra-Poor Graduation, THRIVE, Regreening Communities and WASH financing
- Advocates for child-sensitive climate adaptation financing, shock-responsive social protection and smallholder investment policies that link climate resilience with child nutrition outcomes.

2.2 Market systems and value distribution

The food that reaches children depends not just on what is produced, but on how it moves through markets. Inclusive market systems – where smallholder farmers, women and marginalised producers can participate and earn fair returns – improve household incomes and the local availability of nutritious foods.

When markets are fragmented, concentrated or disrupted by conflict and crisis, food prices rise and diversity falls.

Fair labour conditions matter: children in households affected by unstable incomes, poor wages or exploitative work are at increased risk of food insecurity. Women's participation in food value chains, with equitable pay and access to finance, consistently improves child nutrition outcomes.

What World Vision does

- Strengthens producer organisations and smallholder collective bargaining to improve market access, price stability and income
- Supports inclusive market systems through the Inclusive Markets for Communities (M4C) approach, prioritising women and marginalised groups
- Links smallholder farmers to stable demand, including local procurement for school feeding programmes
- Expands access to financial services for risk management and income diversification (VisionFund)
- Advocates for transparency and accountability in agrifood investment, subsidy reform and inclusive finance policies.

2.3 Food environments, consumption and waste

Food environments – the physical, economic, social and cultural contexts in which food is accessed and consumed – powerfully shape what children eat. Food consumption is not only a matter of availability, but also of choice. These choices are strongly influenced by purchasing power, as well as by social and cultural norms, marketing exposure, and the broader

food environment that shapes preferences, aspirations and dietary behaviours.

Even where healthy foods are available, children's diets are often undermined by the high cost of diverse, healthy options, aggressive marketing of ultra-processed foods, and social norms that influence how food is allocated within households. Together, these factors shape both what is accessible and what is desired, ultimately influencing consumption patterns and nutritional outcomes.

Consumption patterns and food waste are also critical components of the food system. Food waste refers to the decrease in the quantity or quality of food resulting from decisions and actions by retailers, food service providers and consumers. At the same time, post-harvest losses, food spoilage and household-level waste reduce the availability of nutritious food, increase costs, and place additional pressure on natural resources. Reducing food loss and waste can improve the efficiency of land and water use, contributing positively to climate outcomes and livelihoods.

Improving how food systems manage the "last mile" – from market to meal – is therefore essential to ensuring that nutritious food is not only available, but also accessible, affordable and appealing enough to be consumed, particularly by children.

What World Vision does

- Delivers social and behaviour change programmes that promote healthy diets and improve caregiver feeding practices
- Runs school feeding programmes that connect children to nutritious meals and build positive food habits
- Provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support and Infant and Young Child Feeding programming through schools, communities and health services
- Implements Positive Deviance/Hearth programmes to shift household nutrition behaviours
- Advocates for regulatory standards protecting children's diets, including enforcement of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

2.4 Governance and policy coherence

Children's access to healthy food ultimately depends on governments and institutions working coherently across food, climate, finance and social protection. Fragmented policies and weak accountability allow the structural drivers of hunger to persist. World Vision's review of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) confirms that child hunger and nutrition remain poorly integrated into climate planning – a gap with direct consequences for the families most exposed to climate risk.

Children as stakeholders: the ENOUGH Manifesto positions children not only as beneficiaries of food systems, but as rights-holders in governance processes. Meaningful child participation – through Nutrition Dialogues and structured consultation – strengthens the quality and legitimacy of policy decisions.

What World Vision does

- Facilitates Nutrition Dialogues and Child Nutrition Dialogues to elevate children's voices in food governance
- Builds subnational authority capacity to integrate nutrition into local development planning
- Supports multi-sector coordination linking agriculture, health, education and social services (including Home-Grown School Feeding)
- Advocates for child nutrition integration into NDCs, NAPs and climate financing strategies and for stronger accountability in child-sensitive social protection systems.

2.5 Private sector practices

Private sector actors – from smallholder traders and cooperatives to large-scale processors, retailers and financial service providers – play a central role in shaping food systems. They influence what food is produced, how it is priced, how it is marketed, and who ultimately benefits. These decisions are driven by market incentives, but they also have significant implications for nutrition outcomes, equity and sustainability.

Private sector practices are not neutral: they shape food environments, influence consumer choices, and affect the availability, affordability and desirability of nutritious foods. Without appropriate safeguards, commercial incentives may favour highly processed, low-cost foods over more nutritious options, particularly in low-income settings.

Responsible sourcing, fair labour standards, shorter and more transparent value chains, and nutrition-sensitive investment can improve livelihoods and broaden access to healthy diets. Aligning private sector incentives with public health and development goals is therefore critical to transforming food systems and improving nutrition outcomes.

Their decisions on sourcing, pricing and marketing directly shape caregiver incomes and children's diets – particularly where smallholder farmers supply the majority of locally consumed food. Responsible sourcing, inclusive supply chains and transparent value chains are therefore the points where private sector behaviour most immediately affects child nutrition in the communities where World Vision works.

Governments retain primary responsibility for regulation. World Vision's role is not to direct corporate strategy but to promote compliance with regulation and advance child-sensitive accountability mechanisms – particularly around marketing standards, investment criteria and the enforcement of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. Private sector engagement is oriented toward ensuring business practices support, rather than undermine, children's nutrition and long-term well-being.

What World Vision does

- Applies the Inclusive Markets for Communities (M4C) model to develop inclusive, green market systems connecting smallholder farmers – especially women – to markets and finance
- Supports local enterprises and agri-service providers through capacity building and improved access to finance
- Advocates for responsible private sector investment, nutrition-sensitive labelling, food marketing regulation and inclusive, gender-responsive market system policies.

SECTION 3

ENOUGH: Linking field evidence to systems change

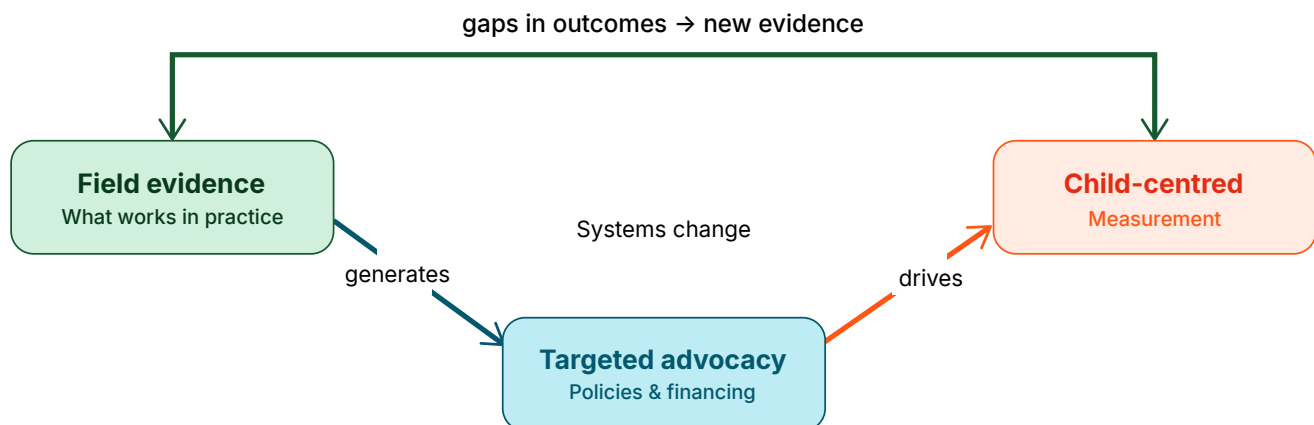


Figure 3: How ENOUGH links field evidence to systems change

The ENOUGH Campaign is World Vision's platform for child-centred food systems transformation. At its core, ENOUGH **reframes the problem**: child hunger is driven not by insufficient global food production, but by systemic failures that prevent children and families from accessing and affording healthy diets, particularly in [fragile and conflict-affected settings](#). [The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty](#) is an important part of this effort, providing a platform to connect actors, strengthen partnerships, align priorities, and accelerate coordinated action towards ending child hunger and malnutrition.

ENOUGH connects three linked functions:

- Generating practical field evidence on what improves child nutrition, how families access and afford healthy diets, and what works in fragile contexts
- Translating that evidence into targeted advocacy on policies, financing and accountability mechanisms that drive food systems change
- Centring children not as one indicator among many, but as the primary measure of whether food systems are working.

Key policy entry points that ENOUGH pursues:

- Child-sensitive climate and agricultural financing (including access to the Green Climate Fund and other adaptation mechanisms)
- Shock-responsive social protection systems, including national school feeding programmes and livelihood safety nets
- Accountability frameworks that embed child nutrition metrics in NDCs, NAPs and investment frameworks
- Inclusive, green and gender-responsive market system policies
- Regulatory frameworks for healthier food environments, including the marketing of breast-milk substitutes.

In fragile contexts, ENOUGH bridges crisis response and long-term transformation by protecting life-saving nutrition interventions, strengthening shock-responsive systems and building livelihoods that reduce vulnerability, so that each crisis does less damage than the last.

SECTION 4

Three priority asks

We urge governments, development banks, climate funds and international partners to:

- **ASK 1. Invest in nationally owned Home-Grown School Feeding programmes**

School feeding is one of the most effective ways to improve children's nutrition, education, and long-term resilience. Governments should establish nationally owned Home-Grown School Feeding programmes that provide safe, varied and nutritious meals, sourced locally from smallholder farmers. These programmes should be backed by sustainable national funding and integrated into education, nutrition and social protection systems.

When schools source food locally, it creates a simple but powerful link between children's diets and local agriculture - improving access to healthy food while strengthening rural livelihoods and local food systems.

- **ASK 2. Integrate child nutrition into climate policies and financing**

Climate change is already undermining children's nutrition and household resilience, yet it remains largely absent from national climate plans and funding decisions.

Governments and climate funds should include child nutrition indicators into NDCs and NAPs, and expand access to child-sensitive climate financing that supports nutrition-sensitive agriculture and smallholder farmers.

Climate investments should prioritise approaches that strengthen climate-resilient agriculture, support livelihoods, and build local food systems that protect children's access to healthy diets.

- **ASK 3. Invest in child-centred and resilient food systems in low-income countries**

Low-income countries remain highly vulnerable to food price volatility, weak local food systems and dependence on imported food supplies.

Governments and international partners should prioritise investment in strong, locally rooted food systems, including climate-resilient agriculture, land restoration, nutrition-sensitive livelihoods, local procurement systems and shock-responsive social protection.

Strengthening producer organisations and smallholder collective bargaining can improve market access, price stability and incomes, all of which contribute directly to sustainably reducing child hunger and malnutrition.



SECTION 5

Quick reference: Domains, programmes and advocacy

Use this table to orient your team, design programme activities or prepare advocacy positions aligned with the ENOUGH framework.

Domain	How it shapes child nutrition	World Vision programming	Advocacy entry points
Production Systems & Livelihoods	Determines income, food availability and diet diversity for farming families	Climate-resilient agriculture; land restoration; savings groups; Ultra-Poor Graduation; THRIVE; Regreening; VisionFund	Child-sensitive climate adaptation financing; smallholder investment policies; shock-responsive social protection
Market Systems & Value Distribution	Shapes affordability, market access and household incomes; determines who benefits from food value chains	Producer organisation strengthening; M4C inclusive market systems; local procurement for school feeding; VisionFund financial access	Agrifood investment accountability; inclusive finance policies; transparent subsidy reform; fair labour standards
Food Environments, Consumption & Waste	Influences what food is available, affordable and promoted; shapes consumption patterns and waste	Social behaviour change; school feeding; nutrition and IYCF education; Positive Deviance/Hearth programmes	Regulatory standards for school food and marketing; breast-milk substitute code enforcement
Governance & Policy Coherence	Determines whether policies across food, climate, finance and social protection reinforce or undermine child nutrition	Nutrition Dialogues; Child Nutrition Dialogues; multi-sector coordination; Home-Grown School Feeding; CVA and safety nets	Child nutrition integration into NDCs/NAPs; access to climate financing; child participation in governance
Private Sector Practices	Shapes food pricing, marketing, labelling, sourcing and who gains from agrifood value chains	M4C inclusive market model; local enterprise support; access to finance for marginalised producers	Nutrition-sensitive labelling; responsible food marketing regulation; inclusive, gender-responsive market system policies

RESOURCES

Key resources

- [Hungry Futures Index](#)
- [ENOUGH Food Systems Manifesto](#)
- [ENOUGH Policy Brief: Children's Right to Healthy Diets](#)
- [Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme](#)
- [Savings for Transformation / VisionFund](#)
- [Regreening Communities](#)
- [HLPE Report 12: Nutrition and Food Systems \(2017\)](#)
- [SOFI Report 2025](#)
- [World Bank Investment Framework for Nutrition 2024](#)

This framework is intended to be read alongside the ENOUGH Food Systems E-Course and the ENOUGH Food System Manifesto. It should be reviewed and updated as programme evidence, policy priorities and campaign strategy evolve.

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