



Eleanor Crook
Foundation

UK Leadership on Malnutrition

A building block for
security and stability

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MARCH 2026

Eleanor Crook Foundation

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Foreword

This paper has been developed to make the case for placing nutrition at the heart of the UK's development and foreign policy agenda.

Each day around the world, thousands of children die of malnutrition. It is a causal or significant factor in 40% of child deaths in low and middle-income countries. For those who survive, malnutrition in the early years permanently stunts a child's physical and cognitive development — depriving children and their communities of the potential and opportunity they need to flourish.

Yet we have the tools to solve this problem. New technological advancements and evidence-based interventions make addressing malnutrition one of the most effective, foundational and high-return investments the UK can make. It underpins progress in health and education, promotes stability, and supports the UK's security diplomatic objectives.

The UK government's ambition to modernise its approach to international development - delivering value for taxpayers' money with a clear focus on measurable outcomes - makes the case for placing nutrition as a core priority.

With evidence-based interventions and cross-sector collaboration, this paper demonstrates how investment in malnutrition delivers measurable returns across global health, economic growth, and stability — directly supporting the Government's core priorities. It also highlights how coordinated cross-government action on nutrition, at home and abroad, can align domestic and international priorities. In doing so, it strengthens public understanding of the UK's role and its safeguarding of global health leadership.

As donor ODA budgets come under pressure, it is essential that governments work more strategically and intentionally with philanthropic partners, including through innovative financing platforms such as the Child Nutrition Fund and other platforms that leverage innovation and co-financing.

Recent announcements on future aid allocations only reinforce that case. As ODA is increasingly focused on conflict-affected areas, at the same time as a greater share of the budget is channeled through multilateral institutions, protecting high-impact investments that tackle malnutrition will be essential to maintaining both development effectiveness and long-term resilience.

Tackling malnutrition is not just a development priority, but is a strategic lever for both national and global security, aligning with the FCDO's objectives in an era of constrained budgets and heightened geopolitical risk.

With thanks,
Amit Paley
*President, Global Advocacy & Philanthropy
Eleanor Crook Foundation*



Executive summary

Nutrition is the foundation of development. It is integral to improving global health, responding to humanitarian crises, and protecting the climate and nature. Its impact also extends beyond the confines of traditional development boundaries, playing a vital role in defence, diplomacy and human security.

In a new environment for international development, where defence and security concerns have become central to the government's foreign policy agenda, the UK is rightly rethinking what effective international cooperation looks like. As the UK prepares to set out its priorities for development cooperation at the Global Partnerships Conference in May 2026, there is an opportunity to better communicate the impact and mutual interest of investment in malnutrition, and position it as foundational to contributing towards the government's four strategic shifts: *from donor to investor, from service delivery to systems support, from grants to expertise, and from international to local provision.*

Yet despite its central role, nutrition remains drastically overlooked. Every year 3 million children die from malnutrition, and nearly half of child deaths under 5 are linked to malnutrition¹. At the same time less than 1% of global aid targets malnutrition-specific programmes². This is even more striking given that interventions to tackle malnutrition are among the most cost-effective investments for public money.

Backed by rigorous research and with proven effectiveness, reductions in malnutrition have been one of the major development success stories of the last 25 years. This success story is now in jeopardy because of conflict, climate change and dramatically reduced aid.

Malnutrition interventions have the potential to radically transform the life chances of people in low income and fragile contexts and increase our security at home. Evidence shows that improved nutrition reduces conflict risk, lowers forced migration pressures, and delivers long-term health and economic gains. For example, a 1% rise in hunger correlates with a 2% increase in migration³, while countries reducing stunting see significant gains in productivity and stability⁴.

The interventions and recommendations discussed in this paper are a new approach to development, one that focuses on evidence-based, value-for-money investments and maximises collaboration to deliver the greatest possible impact for UK taxpayers. Central to this approach is a commitment to genuine partnership with the Global South, working alongside national governments and local institutions to ensure that solutions are co-designed, sustainable, and aligned with country priorities. The case studies included in this paper demonstrate what this looks like in practice: how targeted nutrition investment can catalyse policy reform, strengthen national systems, and deliver sustainable impact at scale.

¹ World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition>

² Gates Foundation: <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/our-work/programs/global-growth-and-opportunity/nutrition>

³ World Food Programme: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000015358/download/?_ga=2.170054496.1159968330.1569553057-184252046.1569440059

⁴ Tackling Global Malnutrition and Hunger in the Final Push Toward the 2030 Agenda: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12525532/>



Our key policy proposals to Government

1

Make a multi-year commitment to the Child Nutrition Fund

As a founding partner, the UK can take a leading role in leveraging private and philanthropic investing. The FCDO should also work with donors including Irish Aid, Global Affairs Canada, UNICEF, private donors and philanthropies to co-convene an annual Child Nutrition Fund high-level event to catalyse more funding from new partners (in addition to the regular ongoing steering group members meetings).

2

Create a joined-up Nutrition Accountability Framework across FCDO, DHSC and DEFRA

Develop a cross-government framework that tracks and publishes progress on nutrition at home and abroad, links domestic and international challenges, and is supported by a Nutrition Advisory Board that transparently reports spending and prioritises cost-effective interventions such as Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food and prenatal vitamins for pregnant women (MMS) as entry points ahead of systemic regional reforms.

3

Create a multilateral leadership goal on malnutrition rates to be achieved by 2035

Alongside the UK's own development targets on malnutrition, the UK should adopt and agree with international partners a global target on malnutrition rates, working with partners such as the World Bank to design clear, measurable outcomes for example, reducing poor birth outcomes rates by 2035 in priority regions like East Africa.

4

Work with international financial institutions and private creditors to embed nutrition and food security investment requirements within all debt relief and restructuring frameworks

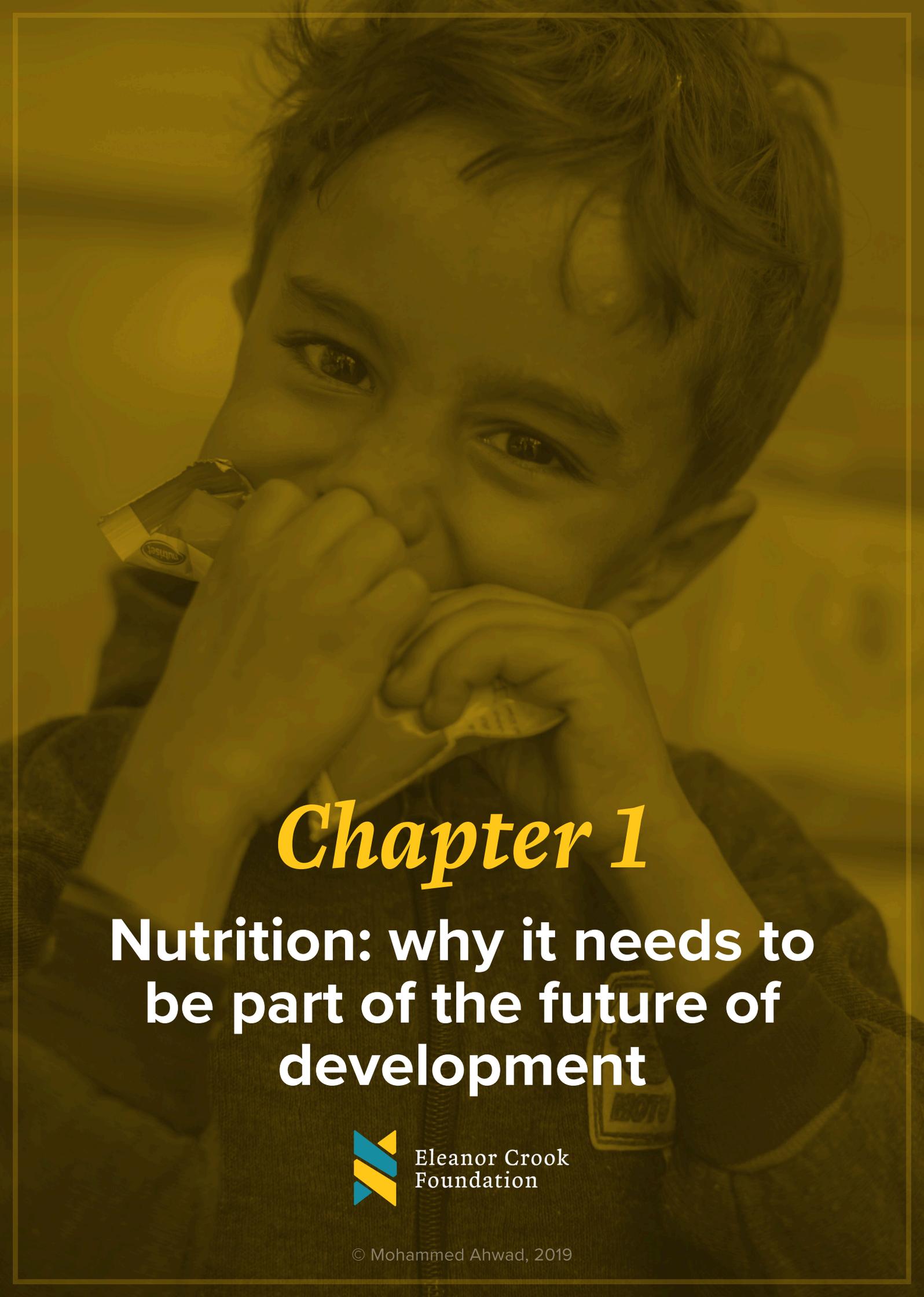
To promote sustainability, the UK should work alongside others to embed food and malnutrition goals within debt restructuring and financial reforms, ensuring that any savings from debt relief are reinvested to tackle malnutrition.

5

Ensure that tackling malnutrition is explicitly prioritised within the 1.5% of GDP that the UK has committed to spend on enhancing the country's resilience and security

This should include integrating nutrition as a systemic component for resilience and security planning and delivery, both domestically and internationally, including through mechanisms such as the UK Integrated Security Fund.



A young boy with dark hair is shown from the chest up, eating a biscuit. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. The boy is wearing a dark-colored zip-up jacket.

Chapter 1

Nutrition: why it needs to be part of the future of development



Eleanor Crook
Foundation

Chapter 1

At a time when resources are more stretched than ever, focusing on where ODA money can be used most effectively is essential. The UK's ODA budget must rightly be centred on impact, value for money and transparency. Nutrition, for the past 25 years, has proven that it is a 'best buy' for development interventions, with the World Bank estimating that for every \$1 invested there is a return of \$23⁵.

**For every \$1
invested in
nutrition there is a
return of \$23**

World Bank

In contrast, the cost of not tackling malnutrition is huge. The World Bank estimates that undernutrition costs the global economy over US \$1 trillion annually⁶. Malnutrition perpetuates cycles of poverty. It affects brain development, educational achievement and long-term health, hindering productivity and economic opportunity. In Africa, undernutrition is estimated to cost up to 16.5% of GDP; that number in Asia is 11% of GDP. In low- and middle-income countries, it is estimated that childhood stunting costs the private sector US\$135 billion in lost sales per year as it lowers people's ability to produce, earn and spend over time⁷.

More broadly, nutrition is foundational to building effective health systems. Well-nourished populations place less strain on health services, require fewer interventions, and respond better to treatment. Specifically, malnutrition reduces the ability of the immune system to fight infections - with 89% of malnutrition-related deaths involving infectious diseases such as pneumonia, sepsis, and diarrhea⁸. Integrating nutrition-specific interventions into health system platforms such as immunisation programmes and antenatal care significantly improves both nutrition outcomes and the effectiveness of the primary health intervention itself.

Any reduction in focus on this issue means more children will suffer and die from preventable malnutrition. But it also means that the world will be a less secure, less safe place.

“Something is very wrong with a world in which hunger and malnutrition are a fact of life for billions of children, women and men. The world is facing a food crisis of unprecedented proportions... and the climate crisis, conflicts, and inequality are deepening this challenge.”

António Guterres
Secretary-General, United Nations

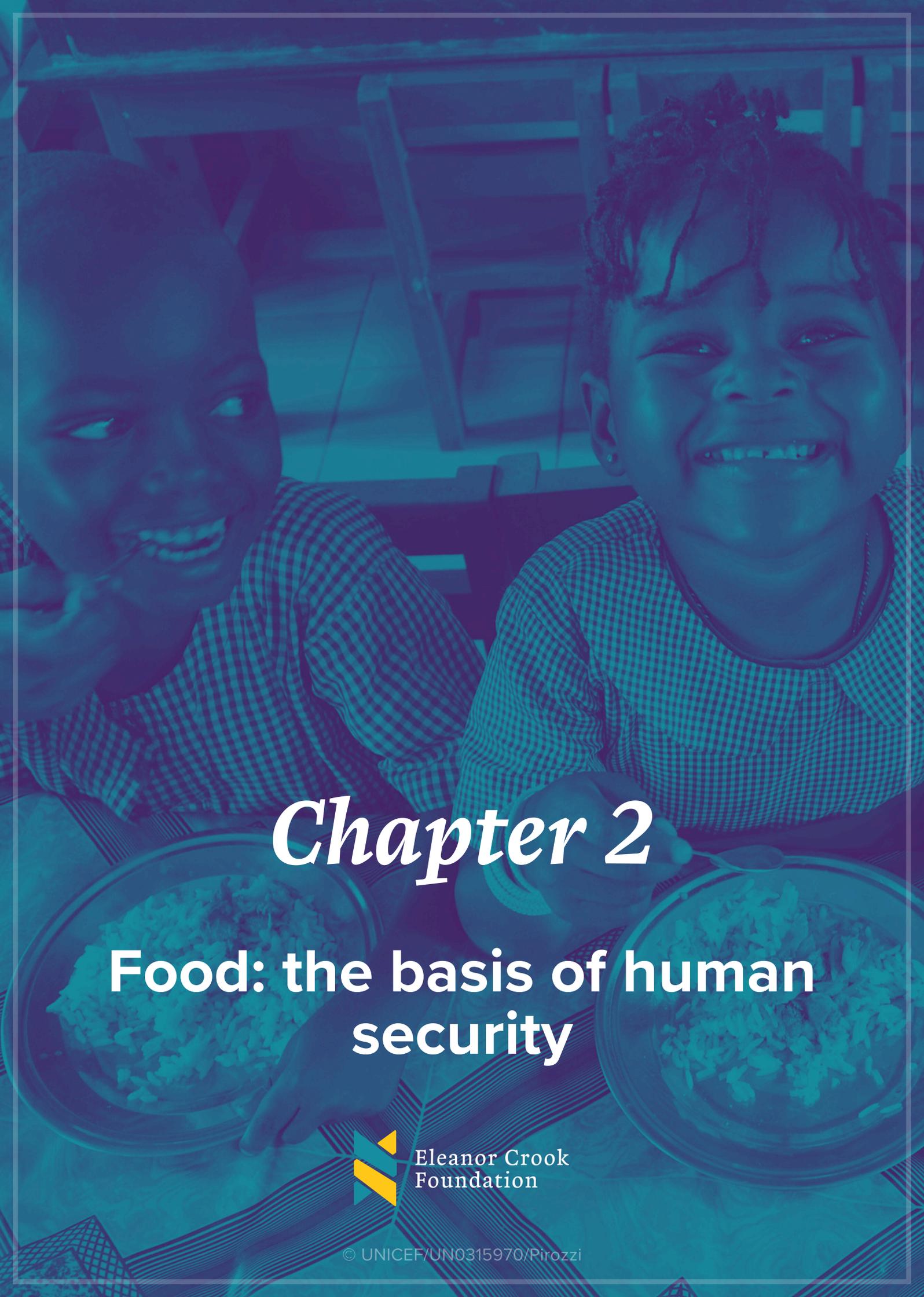
Simple, proven interventions such as Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) and Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), make this possible. Nutrition is a foundation for productivity, stability and women's empowerment, and should therefore be prioritised within an evidence-led UK aid budget, which endeavours to be 'sharper and smarter'.

⁵ World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/nutrition/publication/investment-framework-nutrition>

⁶ World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/nutrition/overview>

⁷ World Food Programme: <https://www.wfp.org/ending-malnutrition>

⁸ Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance Network. Contribution of malnutrition to infant and child deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11624724/>

A photograph of two young children, a boy on the left and a girl on the right, sitting at a table and eating. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. They are wearing checkered shirts. In front of them are plates of white rice. The background shows a wooden chair and a window with a grid pattern. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Chapter 2

Food: the basis of human security



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Foundation

Chapter 2

Nutrition sits at the heart of **human security**, defined as the ability of humans to live and thrive without fear for their lives, livelihoods or future opportunities.

*1% rise in hunger =
2% uptick in
migration*

World Food Programme

Whilst the current geopolitical context has necessitated governments to prioritise defence-related spending, it is vital not to lose sight of why we invest in peace and security in the first place - to enable people to live, work, and thrive free from fear and instability. The UK's new commitment under the June 2025 NATO pledge⁹ to allocate 5% of GDP to national security, including a projected 1.5% for resilience and security, provides an opportunity to define what that resilience truly means. How this 1.5% is deployed and whether development and ODA priorities such as nutrition, health, and climate are recognised within it will determine whether the UK's approach strengthens long term global stability or simply responds to short term threats.

Ensuring that nutrition focused development spending is recognised within both NATO's frameworks and OECD DAC rules would maximise the impact of UK aid while advancing its strategic interests, in line with the objectives of the Integrated Security Fund¹⁰.

Currently, food is being increasingly weaponised. In Ukraine, Russia targeted agricultural infrastructure, damaging global supply chains and causing the rise of food prices and hunger globally. In Gaza, the deliberate restriction of food and humanitarian access has shown how control over food can be used as a tool of war, deepening civilian suffering and fuelling regional instability. Militants and extremists in fragile contexts are exploiting food insecurity to attract or coerce people to join them. This has been used by terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab in Somalia, the Islamic State offered refugees food and cash payments of up to \$1,000 to join, and Boko Haram provided meals and loans to prospective recruits¹¹.

According to the WFP¹², a 1% rise in hunger correlates with an almost 2% uptick in migration, highlighting how food insecurity is a significant "push factor" for population movement. This is why **food security** is a question of **international security**. Investing in food security is a strategically smart defence measure, as well as a way to build soft power through partnerships.

“Food security is the first line of defence against chaos, instability and conflict.”

David Beasley

Former Executive Director, World Food Programme

⁹ GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-deliver-on-5-nato-pledge-as-government-drives-greater-security-for-working-people>

¹⁰ GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-fund-announced-to-support-uks-national-security-priorities>

¹¹ Center for Strategic & International Studies: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/dangerously-hungry-link-between-food-insecurity-and-conflict>

¹² World Food Programme: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000015358/download/>

¹³ Center for Strategic & International Studies: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/dangerously-hungry-link-between-food-insecurity-and-conflict>

Food security is, in turn, impacted heavily by climate change. There is substantial evidence of the link between rising global temperatures and reduced food, which in turn feeds into the cycle of instability and conflict in countries¹³. Climate change is in fact a nutrition crisis, with global warming reducing nutrient content in crops, meaning more chemicals are used to counter climate stress, in turn harming food safety, soil, and human health.



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Poor food security and malnutrition is also closely tied to major infectious disease and poor health. It has been associated with hypertension, diabetes, anxiety, depression and increased risk of HIV acquisition¹⁴.

The world becomes a less safe place when questions of food security, availability, and nutrition are uncertain. “Food security” in this context was not mentioned in the UK’s 2025 National Security Strategy, the title of which was ‘Security for the British People in a Dangerous World,’ yet it did not consider one of the key drivers of that ‘danger’. Compare that to the 2022 United States National Security Strategy, which cited food on 30 occasions, more than twice as many times as any other reason for global insecurity¹⁵.

The UK should also increase procurement of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) and Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS) (nutrition-specific interventions) within its humanitarian spending, especially in places where conflict is driving high levels of child malnutrition. The UK’s humanitarian portfolio is substantial enough to meaningfully shape procurement patterns in key crises such as Gaza and Sudan. By explicitly targeting its funding towards these proven, life-saving products, the UK has a major opportunity to drive market demand, respond more effectively to severe malnutrition in conflict settings, and ensure that its humanitarian spending delivers fast, measurable results for children.

There is no contradiction between focusing on development and focusing on the UK’s national security. As the FCDO rightly considers what the UK’s development strategy should look like in a new age of international aid and cooperation, nutrition should sit at the heart of that thinking, both for the human security of those in the Global South, and for the security of UK citizens.



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¹⁴ Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes Other than Malnutrition in Southern Africa: A Descriptive Systematic Review, Elias M. A. Militao, Elsa M. Salvador, Olalekan A. Uthman, Stig Vinberg and Gloria Macassa

¹⁵ Center for Strategic & International Studies: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/dangerously-hungry-link-between-food-insecurity-and-conflict>

CASE STUDY 1: FROM DONOR PROJECTS TO NATIONAL SYSTEMS

Nutrition reform in Nepal

As the UK seeks to maximise the impact of its development investments, partnering with philanthropy to support government-owned initiatives presents a significant opportunity. Nepal's leadership demonstrates how sustained investment in nutrition can strengthen state capacity, reinforce health systems, and build long term resilience.

Despite strong political commitment, progress on maternal undernutrition and child wasting in Nepal had been constrained by fragmented donor financing and weak integration of nutrition into core health systems. Through a strategic partnership with the Government of Nepal, ECF has provided catalytic funding to support nationally owned, fiscally sustainable programmes.

Through close collaboration and partnership with ECF and Helen Keller Intl, Nepal has reformed policies and strengthened health systems to provide an enabling environment for the scale-up of MMS and RUTF. A major breakthrough was the inclusion of Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) and wasting treatment commodities (RUTF, F-75, F-100) on Nepal's Essential Medicines List. This reform embedded nutrition within the health system, aligned national policy with WHO guidance, and generated cost savings through tax exemptions on imported commodities.

ECF is also supporting partners to work closely with government counterparts to develop a costed, government-owned roadmap for national MMS scale-up, anchoring delivery in fiscal realism and sustainability rather than parallel donor funding.



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“In Nepal, external support has been most effective when it has strengthened government systems to achieve health and nutrition reforms and scale, rather than through parallel projects. By aligning with national priorities and fiscal realities, our government partnership is helping to translate policy commitments into sustainable reform.”

Sudip Pokhrel

Nepal Country Director, Eleanor Crook Foundation

This case demonstrates how targeted, evidence-led philanthropy can catalyse policy reform, and strengthen government leadership — turning nutrition from a time-bound project into a core public service.



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CASE STUDY 2: NUTRITION AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

Scaling wasting treatment in Ghana

Ghana illustrates how investing in nutrition delivers value for money while strengthening national resilience.

Child wasting treatment in Ghana has historically relied on short-term donor funding, resulting in extremely low coverage. In partnership with the Government of Ghana and the Clinton Health Access Initiative, the Eleanor Crook Foundation is supporting a transition to a government-led, system-integrated model with a national target of reaching 90% of children with wasting.

Key reforms include the integration of wasting treatment into national policies and clinical guidelines, the inclusion of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) on the Essential Medicines List, and the embedding of treatment delivery within routine health services. Strategic procurement reforms reduced RUTF costs by around 30%, enabling significantly greater coverage within existing resource envelopes.



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“As Ghana increases domestic financing for nutrition, progress will depend on whether commitments translate into protected, predictable, and nationally owned funding over time. Civil society is essential to this process, ensuring transparency, monitoring spending, and holding institutions accountable so that nutrition remains a sustained national priority rather than a seasonal promise.”

Dr Charity Binka

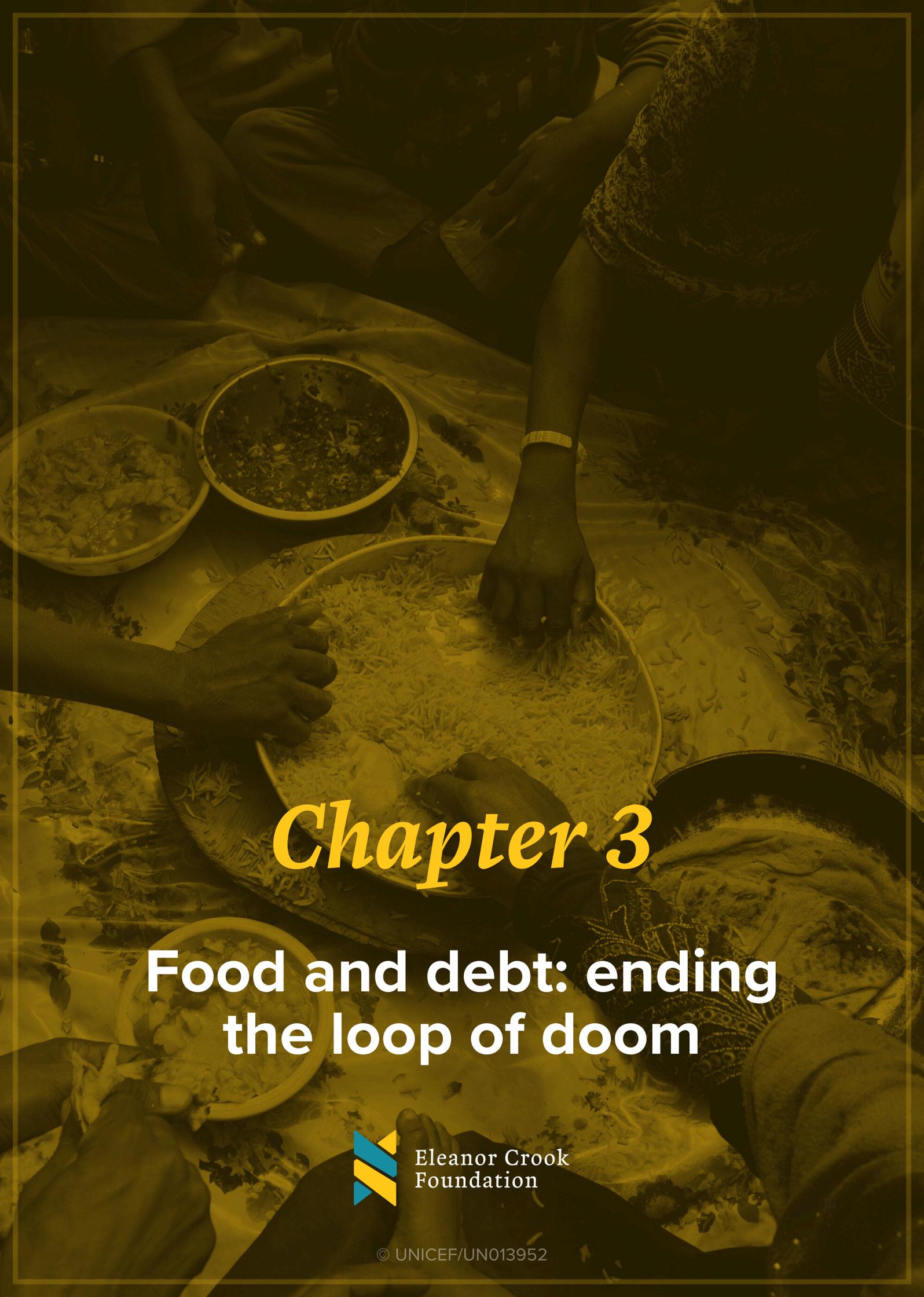
Executive Director, Women, Media and Change (WOMEC)

The next phase focuses on institutionalising RUTF procurement through national supply chains and integrating wasting treatment into Ghana’s National Health Insurance Scheme — providing predictable domestic financing and long-term sustainability beyond donor cycles.

Ghana’s experience shows how nutrition investment can move from emergency response to routine public service delivery, delivering measurable impact, improving efficiency, and strengthening state systems in ways that support long-term stability.



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Chapter 3

Food and debt: ending the loop of doom



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Chapter 3

Across many low- and middle-income countries, food insecurity and sovereign debt are tightly linked. As debt levels rise, governments are forced to make tough choices about how to spend shrinking budgets. Too often, this means cutting back on investments that keep people healthy and fed, such as farming and agriculture support or community nutrition services. The result produces a destructive cycle: high debt limits spending on food and nutrition, leading to weaker, less productive populations and slower economic growth, which then in turn makes it harder to repay the debt.

This cycle, highlighted by *United Against Malnutrition and Hunger (UAMH)*, is playing out across countries such as Kenya and Pakistan, where debt repayments now consume up to half of government revenue¹⁶. As public spending is squeezed, the price of essential food and agricultural goods rise, pushing millions further into hunger and malnutrition.

Breaking this cycle requires rethinking how international cooperation and financing work. Wilton Park calls for new, fairer partnerships between governments, donors, and international institutions, where financial reforms and social outcomes go hand in hand¹⁷. One practical way to do this is by linking debt relief to food and nutrition goals, reframing debt relief not simply as “wiping the slate clean,” but as a pathway toward long-term sustainability.

This approach would position malnutrition investment not as a “hand out”, but as part of a wider strategy to help developing countries build resilient, self-sustaining food and health systems.

When developing countries receive debt relief or concessional financing, part of the savings should be reinvested directly into strengthening food and nutrition systems, for example, by supporting smallholder farmers, and funding maternal and child malnutrition services. In this way, debt restructuring becomes not just a financial adjustment, but a tool for improving lives and building resilience.

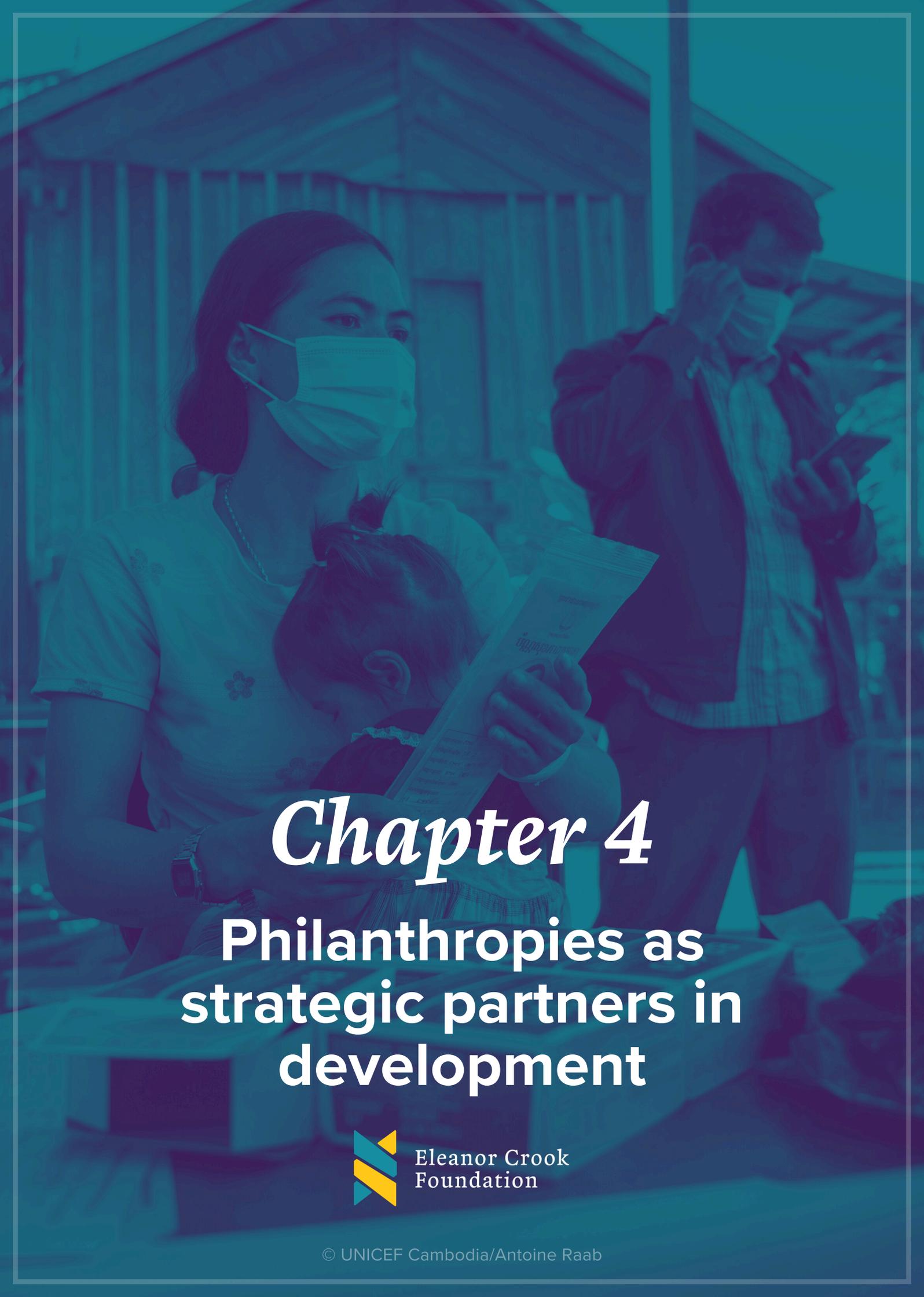


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The UK can play an important leadership role in driving this agenda forward. By supporting debt for nutrition or debt for food security swaps, working with international financial institutions to protect nutrition spending, and aligning UK aid with country led food systems, it can help turn debt from a barrier into a pathway for recovery.

¹⁶ United Against Malnutrition & Hunger: Debt and Malnutrition: Ending the Doom Loop, 12th November 2025: <https://uamh.uk/resources/debt-and-malnutrition-ending-the-doom-loop/>

¹⁷ Wilton Park: <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/reports/reimagining-international-development-cooperation/>



Chapter 4

Philanthropies as strategic partners in development



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Chapter 4

Leading philanthropies recognise tackling malnutrition as critical to their investment in development and are committed to working in partnership. Philanthropic organisations have a unique role in spurring innovation, catalysing funding and convening multilateral partnerships¹⁸.

“I often get asked what I would choose if I could only solve one problem. My answer is always malnutrition. If you don't get enough nutrition in the first two years of life, you don't develop properly, physically or mentally”

Bill Gates
Chair, Gates Foundation

A notable example of how the UK government can partner with philanthropy is the establishment of the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF). The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and the Gates Foundation, working with UNICEF and the FCDO, played a central role in establishing this platform, alongside support from countries including Ireland and Canada. The CNF has also recently secured a \$500 million match funding pledge from the Bezos family.

ECF brings partners together, but also generates research and runs trials that demonstrate what works in tackling malnutrition, strengthening the evidence base needed to drive policy and systems change and ensure that proven interventions, such as RUTF and MMS, are scaled up where they are most needed. In three 'scaling partner countries', Nepal, Ghana and Senegal, ECF works in partnerships with governments, philanthropies and partners to strengthen health systems, catalyse domestic resources and scale up wasting treatment and prenatal supplementation.

CNF secured a \$500 million match funding pledge from the Bezos family

Because nutrition underpins so many aspects of international development, there is a strong opportunity to integrate it into existing delivery systems. ECF's partnership with Gavi on the NutriVax trial demonstrates this potential by testing the delivery of nutrient supplements alongside vaccines, while its joint immunisation–nutrition-integration (INI) learning agenda adds to the evidence base for scaling integrated approaches. These kinds of joined-up partnerships reflect the UK's wider integration agenda, and demonstrate why investing in integrated services is both practical and impactful.



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¹⁸ Gates Foundation: <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/goalkeepers/report/2024-report/>

Philanthropies can leverage existing funds, using grants and co-financing mechanisms to unlock much larger pools of multilateral investment, ensuring that every pound spent goes further.

Closer collaboration can ensure that limited public funds go further, catalyse private and multilateral investment, and sustain progress in tackling malnutrition at scale.

“Partnerships like the Child Nutrition Fund show what we can achieve when we work together. With UNICEF, the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, and the Gates Foundation, we are aiming to prevent, detect, and treat malnutrition for 70 million women and 230 million children in 23 countries.”

Baroness Chapman
Minister of State for Development and Africa

By working across these roles, philanthropies amplify the message that malnutrition is not just one priority among many, but a proven success story that should be central to future development and ODA spending. As donor ODA budgets come under pressure, it is essential that governments work more strategically and intentionally with philanthropic partners, particularly through innovative financing platforms such as the CNF and other platforms that leverage innovation and co-financing.



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Chapter 5

A new approach to international development



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Chapter 5: Expanded Government recommendations

In a context of increased global insecurity and a reduced ODA budget, it is more vital than ever to identify and prioritise interventions that respond to geostrategic challenges, pursue innovation and spend UK taxpayers' money effectively. More than ever there is a need to align agendas from different parts of international and domestic policy, including food systems, conflict, and climate change, to drive and sustain change.

This paper includes five policy proposals that demonstrate just that, with a basic thesis underpinning them all: nutrition and food security provide the lens through which to effectively address a huge swathe of development related issues and improve human security at both home and abroad.

1 UK government to make a multi-year commitment to the Child Nutrition Fund.

The UK should make a renewed, multi-year commitment to nutrition, building on its role as a founding partner of the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF). The CNF provides a proven, high-impact mechanism that converts relatively modest public investment into significantly greater returns by leveraging private, philanthropic, and multilateral co-financing. By continuing to champion the CNF model, the UK can maximise value for money, drive measurable improvements in child nutrition, and reinforce its reputation for innovation and leadership in development finance.

To sustain and expand this momentum, the UK should take an active role in growing the fund's donor base. The FCDO should co-convene with other donors including Irish Aid and GAC as well as UNICEF, private donors and philanthropies an annual Child Nutrition Fund forum, positioning the UK as a catalyst for broader international financing. Strengthening this partnership driven approach would help ensure the long term sustainability, reach, and impact of global efforts to end child malnutrition.

2 Create a joined-up Nutrition Accountability Framework across FCDO, DHSC and DEFRA.

Child malnutrition is a universal challenge affecting children in low, middle, and high income countries alike. UNICEF's recent report¹⁹ shows malnutrition is affecting children in every region and income group and warns that progress on reducing child wasting and stunting is stalling. Recent data shows worrying trends in the growth of children in the UK, with the height of children aged five declining between 2013 and 2023²⁰. By presenting a coherent narrative and set of measures across domestic and international efforts, there is an opportunity to connect the everyday concerns of citizens with global challenges of malnutrition, food insecurity, and climate change. A more integrated approach would reinforce the UK's credibility as a champion of accessible, sustainable nutrition at home and abroad, while helping policymakers demonstrate how international action delivers clear and tangible benefits for people in the UK. This should be backed by the creation of a Nutrition Advisory Board to join up efforts across government.

To deliver this, departments should commit to publishing joint nutrition metrics that track progress on key indicators such as stunting, wasting and anemia rates, alongside transparent reporting of the amounts of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive funding allocated and actually spent, particularly within humanitarian budgets.

Within this framework, the UK should explicitly prioritise, and report on, the most cost-effective malnutrition interventions, including RUTF and MMS, as well as the most effective, innovative evidence-based approaches. Taken together, these measures would strengthen accountability, improve value for money, and reinforce the UK's credibility as a global leader in nutrition security.

More broadly, nutrition and any framework should be explicitly integrated into any global health strategy, reflecting nutrition as one of the foundational pillars to health system effectiveness and ensuring that health system investments deliver improved nutritional outcomes.



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¹⁹ UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/media/144496/file/Child%20Nutrition%20Fund%20%28Full%20document%29.pdf>

²⁰ C3 Collaborating For Health: <https://www.c3health.org/addressing-child-malnutrition-in-the-uk-a-growing-crisis/>

3 Create a multilateral leadership goal on malnutrition rates, by 2035.

Alongside its own FCDO targets on malnutrition, the UK should adopt and agree with international partners a global target on child survival rates, working with partners such as the World Bank to design clear, measurable outcomes, for example, reducing malnutrition rates by 2035 in priority regions like East Africa.

This would reaffirm the UK's leadership in global health and demonstrate a focused, results driven commitment within the multilateral system. Maintaining and expanding malnutrition as a priority for FCDO, following existing commitments in health and education, would protect vital programmes from cuts and bolster

the UK's reputation as an innovator and convener in global health.

A multilateral approach to tackling malnutrition is welcome, but it is important that it is aligned with the UK's stated ODA principles by directing resources into the highest-impact, most cost-effective nutrition interventions. As a greater share of a reduced ODA budget is channeled through multilateral institutions, a multilateral development review - as called for by the International Development Committee²¹ - is needed to ensure that resources are directed through the most effective institutions and towards the highest-impact, most cost-effective nutrition interventions.

4 Work with international financial institutions and private creditors to embed nutrition and food security investment requirements within all debt relief and restructuring frameworks.

The UK should work with international financial institutions and private creditors to ensure that nutrition and food security are embedded within all debt relief and restructuring frameworks. Evidence from UAMH's "Debt and Malnutrition: Ending the Doom Loop" shows that rising debt burdens are forcing low- and middle-income countries to cut vital health, food, and nutrition programmes undermining growth and stability. To promote sustainability, embedding food and nutrition goals within debt restructuring and financial reforms, ensures that any savings from debt

relief are reinvested in food systems, for example in smallholder farming and maternal and child nutrition services.

The UK should also promote debt for nutrition or debt for food security swaps, and advocate for debt assessments that consider human development outcomes, not just repayment capacity. By aligning debt relief, ODA, and development reform with measurable outcomes on food and nutrition, the UK can help turn debt from a barrier into a catalyst for economic recovery and long-term resilience.

²¹ House of Commons International Development Committee: Future of UK aid and development assistance: interim report: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/51459/documents/285473/default/>

5 **Ensure that tackling malnutrition is explicitly prioritised within the 1.5% of GDP that the UK has committed to spend on enhancing the country's resilience and security.**

Ensuring that nutrition focused development spending is recognised and safeguarded within conflict zones, guarantees that those most affected by violence and instability continue to receive vital assistance. To achieve this, the UK should ensure that nutrition-focused development spending is formally recognised and safeguarded within conflict zones so that those most affected by violence and instability continue to receive essential support.

This includes prioritising it as part of the UK Integrated Security Fund and using the UK's convening power to work to embed these priorities within both NATO's frameworks and OECD DAC rules. This would help maximise the impact of UK aid while aligning security investments with the UK's broader strategic and humanitarian goals, matching the approach of the Integrated Security Fund.

In conclusion

Nutrition is not just a health issue but a foundation of human security and global stability. It is one of the most cost-effective, proven interventions in development, with the power to save lives, strengthen economies, and reduce conflict. By building on models like the Child Nutrition Fund, aligning domestic and international food strategies, and setting ambitious multilateral goals on child survival, the UK has an opportunity to lead with credibility and impact. With acknowledgement of constrained government budgets and rising insecurity, placing nutrition at the heart of the UK's future approach to development is both a strategic and moral imperative - delivering measurable benefits abroad while strengthening security and resilience at home.

About the Eleanor Crook Foundation

The Eleanor Crook Foundation is a growing U.S. philanthropy focused on scaling the most cost-effective interventions to address malnutrition with an overall goal of saving as many children's lives as possible. Achieving sustainable scaling of the highest impact interventions requires evidence, global and national systems reform, and increased financing. To support this, we invest across the spectrum of implementation research, policy analysis, and advocacy. Our role extends far beyond grantmaking; we leverage our expertise and voice to advance the fight against malnutrition.



Eleanor Crook
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