

GHF
2025



Geneva
Health
Forum

**MALNUTRITION, THE ROAD TO 2030:
BUILDING ON SUCCESS, FACING WHAT'S NEXT**



TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

CAMPUS BIOTECH, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND





"Converge for impact. Put nutrition in everything."

David Nabarro, Geneva, May 22, 2025

We would like to acknowledge the **late Sir David Nabarro (1949–2025)**, whose leadership in global health, food security and nutrition greatly influenced international efforts. His contributions, including to the Geneva Health Forum, remain an enduring source of inspiration for advancing equity, resilience and sustainable solutions worldwide.



Conference Agenda

MAY 20, 2025

2 pm - 2.10 pm

Opening remarks:

Valérie Bellino, Project Manager, Geneva Health Forum (GHF)

2.10 pm - 2.40 pm

Keynote: Setting the scene from the N4G to 2030 – Commitments made, challenges faced, and road ahead

Speaker: **Afshan Khan**, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN)

Interviewer: **Prathit Singh**, master's student, International Development, Geneva Graduate Institute (IHEID)

2.40 pm - 4.10 pm

Roundtable discussion: Voice from the field – Building on success, facing what's next

Panellists: **Azucena Milana-Dayanghirang**, Assistant Secretary and Director IV, National Nutrition Council, The Philippines

Moumouni Kinda, General Director, Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA)

Claudia Hudspeth, Global Health Lead, Aga Khan Foundation

Nancy Aburto, Deputy Director, Food and Nutrition Division, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Lina Mahy, Cross-cutting Lead Partnerships, Nutrition and Food Safety department, World Health Organization (WHO)

Facilitator: **David Nabarro** († 2025), Strategic Director, 4SD Foundation

Closing reflections:

Dan Irvine, Global Director, Health and Nutrition
World Vision International (WVI)

4.10 pm - 4.30 pm

Conclusive remarks and call of action: exploring the potential and relevance for a Geneva-based initiative dedicated to ensuring Nutrition's forefront position in global agendas

Speaker: **Francesco Branca**, Invited Professor. Institute of Global Health, University of Geneva (UNIGE)

Facilitator: **Valérie Bellino**, Project Manager. Geneva Health Forum (GHF)



Opening remarks

Since its creation in 2006 by the Geneva University Hospitals and the University of Geneva, the Geneva Health Forum (GHF) held alongside the World Health Assembly, has provided a platform for dialogue and debate on global health. Over the years, it has become a key moment for practitioners, policymakers, academics, and students to address urgent issues and align Geneva's voice with international health priorities.

The 2025 Forum focuses on three themes: migration and health, climate change and health, and nutrition. While Migration and Climate change were introduced in 2024, Nutrition is addressed for the first time under the theme:

Nutrition: The Road to 2030: Building Success – Facing What's Next.

Nutrition remains one of the most pressing and complex challenges in global health. All forms of malnutrition —undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight/obesity—affect every region of the world and all age groups. The year 2025 is a milestone for international nutrition targets, yet progress is slow and uneven. The session seeks to take stock of what has been achieved, identify gaps, and reflect on how Geneva can contribute to advancing solutions.

The Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition, adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2012, set six global targets for 2025:

- Reduce stunting in children under five by 40%.
- Halve anaemia in women of reproductive age.
- Reduce low birth weight by 30%.
- Prevent any increase in childhood overweight.
- Increase exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months to at least 50%.
- Reduce and maintain wasting in children under five to below 5%.

Despite progress in some countries, the targets remain out of reach. Today, 45 million children suffer from wasting, and 48 million are stunted. Malnutrition contributes to 45% of deaths among children under five. In Gaza, the World Food Programme expects 17,000 children to face malnutrition, highlighting the intersection between global targets and humanitarian crises.

The international community has taken important steps in recent months. At the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris in March 2025, 47 countries made over 400 commitments and pledged significant funding for the next four years. The Geneva Nutrition Dialogues in December also provided an opportunity to strengthen collaboration and align priorities.

Geneva plays a strategic role in advancing nutrition advocacy. Hosting this session highlights the city's position as a driving force for global nutrition solutions and helps build momentum towards achieving the 2030 targets.



Valérie Bellino

"I believe in the strategic role of Geneva in making progress on nutrition. So, in holding this session here today, the aim is to highlight how Geneva can be a driving force to improve global nutrition solutions and to help build the momentum towards meeting the 2030 targets".



Keynote: Setting the scene from the N4G to 2030 - Commitments made, challenges faced, and road ahead

Prathit Singh, a master's student at the Geneva Graduate Institute and youth representative, asked Afshan Khan three questions to define the current global Nutrition situation.

Prathit Singh, Geneva Graduate Institute:

- Afshan, welcome, and thank you for joining us. The SUN Movement played a central role in the recent Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in Paris. Could you share what was at stake, what commitments were made, and whether expectations were met?

- That's a strong outcome. But looking ahead, what challenges do you see in turning these commitments into action?

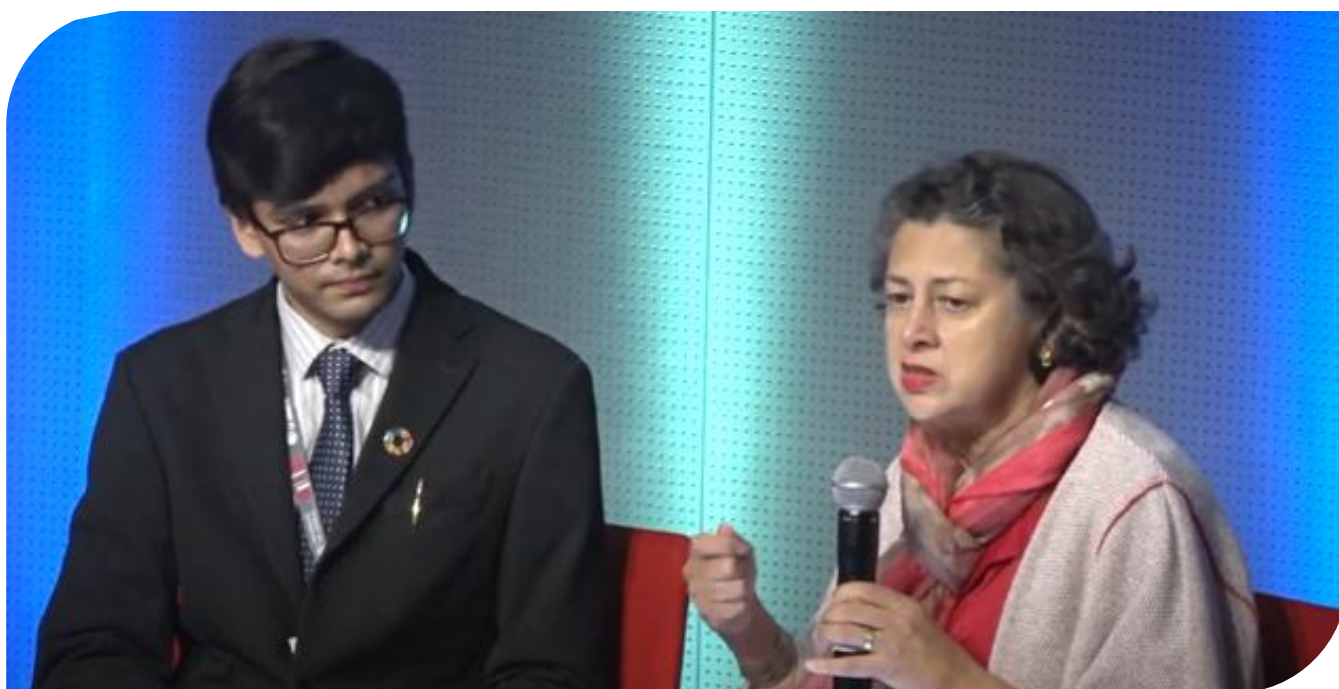
- And what role can International Geneva play in advancing this agenda, especially for young people?

Afshan Khan, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement:

- N4G was a landmark moment. It highlighted nutrition's impact beyond health—on child survival, social development, productivity, and economic growth. Strong civil society participation, private sector engagement, and the voices of the youth brought fresh perspectives. Over \$27 billion in commitments were made, including from the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and the European Commission. Importantly, countries also pledged to make contributions through their nation budget by linking nutrition to policy areas like agriculture, climate, and public procurement.

- The main challenge is the decline in development assistance, compounded by conflict and climate crises. Cuts are already undermining nutrition programmes in places like Sudan, Yemen, and Kenya, threatening decades of progress. We need integrated approaches—putting nutrition with one basket with health, immunization, water, sanitation, and social protection. Efficiency through multisectoral action is essential.

- Geneva is a hub for health, humanitarian action, and trade, and offers a unique opportunity to integrate nutrition into global policy. Youth engagement is vital. Examples from Zimbabwe and France show how young advocates can transform policy and practice. NGOs, UN



Dialogue between Prathit Singh and Afshan Khan



Roundtable discussion: Voice from the Field – Building

The roundtable *Voice from the Field – Building on Success, Facing What's Next?* brought together a panel of experts from governments, humanitarian NGOs, multilateral organizations, and foundations engaged in the fight against malnutrition. Moderated by **David Nabarro**, it aimed to amplify the voices of those working in the field while highlighting both achievements and persistent challenges. Discussions focused on the urgency of integrating nutrition in all sectors—health, agriculture, social protection, and climate—and on innovative solutions in financing, governance, and local implementation.

Azusa Milana Dang, representing the Government of the Philippines, shared her country's experience in addressing the triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition, overweight/obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies. While progress has been made in reducing stunting and wasting, major challenges remain, especially in remote island areas where the most vulnerable populations are concentrated. She highlighted the country's multisectoral approach through the SUN Movement, which brings together universities, businesses, civil society, donors, UN agencies, and youth. A key political milestone came in 2024, when President Marcos issued a national directive prioritizing investments in the first 1,000 days of life. Azusa stressed the importance of local governance: municipalities played a vital role during the pandemic by ensuring food security through the distribution of milk and nutritious foods—an example of Bayanihan (community solidarity). The 2023–2028 Nutrition Action Plan rests on three pillars: healthier diets, behaviour change, and strengthened governance. The Philippines is also pioneering fiscal and regulatory policies: sugar-sweetened beverage taxes, front-of-pack labelling, nutrient profiling, and flour fortification. Azusa concluded with the country's ABC priorities: Accelerate action, secure Budgets, and ensure Convergence across sectors.

Dr. Moumouni Kinda, CEO of ALIMA, brought a direct field perspective from West and Central Africa, where his teams treated 350,000 malnourished children in 2023. His message was stark: Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) save lives, yet access remains gravely insufficient. Of the 20 million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition, only half are reached—due to unpredictable and insufficient funding. He called this a “RUTF crisis,” worsened by budget cuts from major donors. Moumouni urged the adoption of innovative financing solutions, such as sugar taxes, which could generate sustainable large-scale funding. He also highlighted three proven operational approaches: Community-based screening by mothers using MUAC (mid-upper arm circumference) tapes. Simplified protocols like OptiMA and CompAS enable more children to be treated with fewer RUTF supplies. Integrated prevention and treatment approaches, for example using nutrition supplements as incentives for vaccination, are also being explored. For him, the urgency is twofold: ensure continuous availability of RUTF and move away from vertical approaches by integrating nutrition into broader health systems.



David Nabarro



Azusa Milana Dang



Moumouni Kinda

On, Facing What's Next



Claudia Hudspath

Claudia Hudspath presented the strategy of the **Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)**, which committed USD 45 million over five years to integrate nutrition into health, social protection, education, and agriculture systems. She emphasized the need for systemic, multisectoral approaches tailored to highly diverse contexts—from Central Asia’s mountain regions to coastal areas of the Indian Ocean. She illustrated this through the Central Asia Stunting Reduction Initiative, a long-term commitment funded by internal resources, which addresses the root causes of maternal and child malnutrition: birth spacing, facility-based deliveries, screening for low birth weight, and prevention of stunting before it becomes irreversible. Claudia stressed the critical link between nutrition and immunization, showing how integration improves both health and vaccination outcomes. She showcased projects at the intersection of climate, agriculture, and nutrition: mangrove restoration and promotion of “blue foods,” reintroduction of traditional cereals like millet, and climate-adapted livestock to strengthen protein intake. Finally, she underscored the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and operational research, made possible through AKDN’s partnership with Aga Khan University, ensuring flexibility in programming and the provision of evidence.



Nancy Aburto

Nancy Aburto of FAO looked at nutrition from a macroeconomic and systemic perspective. Her central message: 2.8 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. She reminded the audience that global agricultural subsidies amount to USD 630 billion annually, yet they are often misdirected, fuelling unhealthy diets whose hidden health and environmental costs exceed USD 10 trillion per year. The solution, she argued, lies in redirecting agricultural subsidies toward diverse and nutritious foods. She also emphasized opportunities within WTO frameworks, allowing integration of nutrition goals into trade policies, and the use of tools such as taxation, labelling, and targeted subsidies. Nancy demonstrated that promoting healthy diets not only improves nutrition, it also helps to achieve our climate and environmental goals. A global shift toward healthy diets could reduce food-system-related greenhouse gas emissions by 13%—a significant contribution to the Paris Agreement. By highlighting synergies with biodiversity and sustainability, she called for nutrition to be fully recognized as a cross-cutting solution to global challenges.



Lena Mahy

Lena Mahy of WHO closed the session with a global governance perspective. She underlined today’s paradox: although nutrition is widely recognized as essential for development, inequalities and power imbalances persist. She contrasted the massive profits of the food industry during the pandemic with the chronic underfunding of acute malnutrition treatment, which would require only 0.1% of global development aid. According to Lena, nutrition stands at a crossroads: despite progress and increased visibility, global targets remain unmet—only two are on track, while four are off course. Using a maritime metaphor, she illustrated the path forward: The compass: global nutrition targets. The ship: the Decade of Action on Nutrition, extended for five years thanks to leadership from several countries. The wind: sustainable financing and political commitment. She stressed that these commitments are not only technical but also moral imperatives. Finally, she called for the establishment of a “Friends of Nutrition” group in Geneva, to provide a strong and coordinated voice and keep nutrition at the top of the global political agenda.

Audience Discussion – Key Points

The exchange with participants emphasized the complexity of today's nutrition challenges and highlighted several areas requiring urgent attention.

Affordability of Healthy Diets

Participants stressed that fiscal measures such as taxing sugary drinks or tobacco can reduce consumption, but they must be coupled with subsidies or social protection to lower the cost of nutritious foods. Affordability remains a critical barrier to healthier diets.

Trade and Food Systems

Concerns were raised about the impact of trade liberalization, which often facilitates the spread of ultra-processed foods while limiting governments' ability to protect domestic production. The need to align trade rules with nutrition goals was underlined.

Food Labelling

Front-of-package labelling was seen as a useful tool, but insufficient on its own. Without awareness campaigns, consumers, particularly children and adolescents, may not interpret the information correctly. Education must accompany regulation.

Ultra-Processed Foods

Ultra-processed foods were identified as a growing threat, associated with malnutrition as were exposure to pesticides, endocrine disruptors, and plastics. WHO is working toward clearer definitions and guidance to help shape policy.

Micronutrient Fortification

Questions were raised about how fortification initiatives, such as folic acid supplementation, can be integrated within broader nutrition and health system strategies. Greater synergy between those involved is needed to avoid fragmentation.

Clinical Nutrition Capacity

A gap was noted in medical and nursing curricula: many health workers lack training in growth monitoring, treatment failure, and nutrition care for patients with chronic conditions, including cancer and renal disease. Integration of nutrition into clinical education and practice was strongly recommended.

Financing and Private Sector Accountability

The discussion highlighted the contrast between limited national budgets and the profits of the food industry, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants called for innovative financing—through taxes and levies—and stronger accountability mechanisms for the private sector.

Migration, Climate, and Conflict

The issue of nutrition problems linked to migration, displacement, and climate disasters was raised. The need for integrated approaches combining humanitarian response with long-term nutrition planning was emphasized.

Social Determinants of Health

Malnutrition was recognized as being rooted in poverty, and exacerbated by questions of equity, gender, and education. Addressing these determinants — by keeping adolescent girls in school, for example—is key to breaking the cycle of undernutrition.

Framing and Language

Finally, the terminology of “nutrition” was questioned. Alternative framing such as “nourishment” or “healthy diets” may resonate more effectively with policymakers and the public.





Concluding remarks

Dan Irvin
World Vision International

“Nutrition is not just about health—it is the golden thread that connects human survival, economic growth, and human rights.”

These concluding reflections were powerfully delivered by **Dan Irving, Global Director of Health and Nutrition at World Vision International**.

This conference has emphatically reminded us that nutrition is both a complex global challenge and an extraordinary opportunity for transformation. The past decades, marked by ambitious commitments such as the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and the World Health Assembly targets, have shown great determination to tackle it. Yet recent crises—the pandemic, economic recession, and growing inequalities—have stalled progress and exposed worsening child survival rates and limited access to essential services. Still, beyond the alarming realities—the triple burden of malnutrition, the fact that the cost of a healthy diet is beyond many people, food price inflation, and the spread of ultra-processed foods — the discussions highlighted practical and inspiring solutions. New commitments from the private sector, charities, and development banks are bringing fresh momentum. Nutrition now stands as a golden thread that links, economics, human rights, and sustainable development in a truly multisectoral agenda. Key priorities include:



- Integrating approaches and combining services for greater efficiency,
- Strengthening regulation, innovative financing, and data systems,
- Building knowledge of and competence in nutrition among workers in the health sector,
- Investing in prevention, early detection, and simplified treatment approaches,
- Engaging youth, consumers, and communities alongside governments, NGOs, and international partners.

Specific examples underlined this momentum: political leadership on the first 1,000 days in the Philippines, millions of children reached through large-scale programs, and significant financial pledges at Nutrition for Growth. The central message is clear: we must all move in the same direction if we are to make an impact. Nutrition must no longer stand apart but be embedded in every policy and every action. Prevention, equity, innovation, and solidarity must guide our collective effort to make nutrition both a fundamental right and a driver of lasting transformation

The 10 Take Away of the Conference

◆ 1. Malnutrition = Global Crisis

Undernutrition, obesity, overweight, and micronutrient deficiencies affect all ages and regions.

🎯 2. 2025 Targets Off-Track

Only 2 out of 6 nutrition goals are on track — progress is too slow.

👶 3. Child Mortality

Malnutrition drives 45% of deaths in children under five.

💰 4. Funding Gap

Financing is insufficient, unstable, and especially weak in humanitarian settings.

🏠 5. Solutions Exist

RUTF saves lives, but only 50% of severely malnourished children can access it.

🤝 6. Multisectoral Action

Linking nutrition with health, education, agriculture, WASH, and social protection multiplies impact.

🌱 7. Local Innovation Works

Community-led actions (e.g. MUAC by mothers) & simplified protocols (OPTIMA, COMPAS) deliver results.

📊 8. Fiscal Measures

Taxes on sugary drinks = major potential to generate resources for nutrition.

CH 9. Geneva as a Global Hub

A platform to position nutrition as a fundamental right and foster collaboration.

🧑 10. Civil Society & Youth

They are not just beneficiaries — they are agents of change.

Call of action: Exploring the potential and relevance



Francesco Branca, who has spent many years at WHO and knows Geneva's international landscape intimately, opened by expressing his pleasure at contributing to a new initiative combining two words he loves: *action* and *nutrition*. He emphasized that nutrition evokes strong emotions—both pride in successes, such as reductions in child mortality or small declines in childhood obesity in some countries, and concern over persistent challenges, including rising obesity and continuing malnutrition worldwide.

He stressed that action must be people-centred and must be taken where the problems are most acute: in primary healthcare centres, communities facing food insecurity, and clinics where children or adults are affected by malnutrition or obesity. Yet, he noted, many crucial decisions are made far from those affected—often in international hubs like Geneva.

Geneva's importance stems from its role as a centre for global policy and dialogue. Key venues include the World

Health Assembly, international Labour Conference, WTO Ministerial discussions, Human Rights Council, migration and climate forums, as well as with influential civil society organizations and academia. These settings allow Geneva to bring together governments, NGOs, parliamentarians, and researchers to influence nutrition policy, labour protections, trade, human rights, and climate-related decisions.

Branca highlighted the energy already present in Geneva: civil society networks, visionary parliamentarians, academia, and past initiatives like SUN, WHO, FAO, and Forces SD dialogues. These provide a strong foundation for targeted advocacy, policy-building, and bringing people together from around the world.

He concluded by emphasizing that the Geneva Nutrition Initiative is not starting from scratch—it builds on previous efforts, leveraging existing platforms and partnerships to move from the “why” to the “what” and “how” of practical, people-centred global nutrition policy.

Francesco Branca
Geneva Institute of Global Health

"We have the knowledge, the energy, and the platforms. Geneva brings together the decision-makers, civil society, and scientists. If we want to make a real impact on nutrition globally, this is where we must act—turning dialogue into specific actions."

Some reactions...



Micaela Serafini, Médecins Sans Frontières

"We believe that we need to make sure nutrition doesn't come as an add-on, but as something basic."



Iveth Gonzalez, Terre des Hommes Fondation

*"When we talk about **nutrition**, it is the way we do it: we explore innovative tools and approaches collaborating with colleagues in the **Protection** and **WASH** sectors."*

for a Geneva-based initiative to ensuring that Nutrition comes first

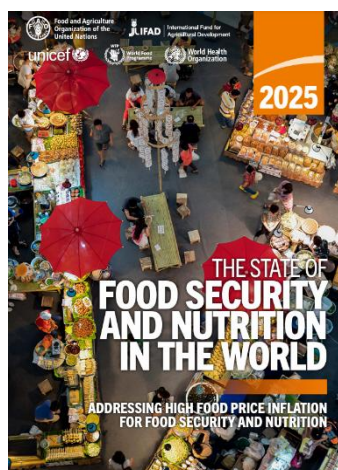
The next steps for the creation of a Geneva Nutrition Initiative

Various international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and partners initiated this nutrition conference with the aim of continuing to advocate with partners in the international Geneva community to combat all forms of malnutrition.

With this in mind, a comprehensive action plan involving all these partners is currently being developed. This plan will propose partners from the Geneva international community that we intend to engage, raise awareness among, and support in order to address malnutrition in a collaborative and innovative manner.

In the coming months, this group is committed to continuing to disseminate information on the state of malnutrition around the world and to proposing solutions that can contribute to reducing it.

All these synergies, facilitated by the coordination of the Geneva Health Forum, will enable us to come back to you with proposals for new meetings that will propel Geneva forward as a new platform where nutrition is on the agenda of international Geneva.



Here is an example of an activity we are considering offering: as part of the release of the “Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report”, its presentation could be organised in Geneva, with representatives from the organizations that drafted it.



Miriam Shindler, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

“Communities know their challenges, and they know their solutions best. Our role here is to bring people together, rather than to tell them what to do.”



Bruno Lab, Geneva University Hospitals

“The Geneva Nutrition Initiative is supported by the HUG and Geneva University as well as the Swiss government”.



The Geneva Health Forum is a non-profit initiative launched in 2006 by the Geneva University Hospitals and the University of Geneva. It provides a neutral platform for dialogue and collaboration between public stakeholders, academia, civil society, and the private sector.

It collaborates with its partners to create synergies to address public health challenges.

We would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the conference: the speakers and facilitators; the international organisations, non-governmental organizations and public partners; and the participants. It is thanks to their involvement, professionalism and kindness that this conference was such a success and marked the beginning of the Geneva Nutrition Initiative.

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