



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

We innovate for action.

We generate solid evidence and effective solutions to save, protect and improve the lives of people and communities.



RESEARCH STRATEGY 2021 - 2025

RESEARCH STRATEGY

From evidence to action | 2021-2025

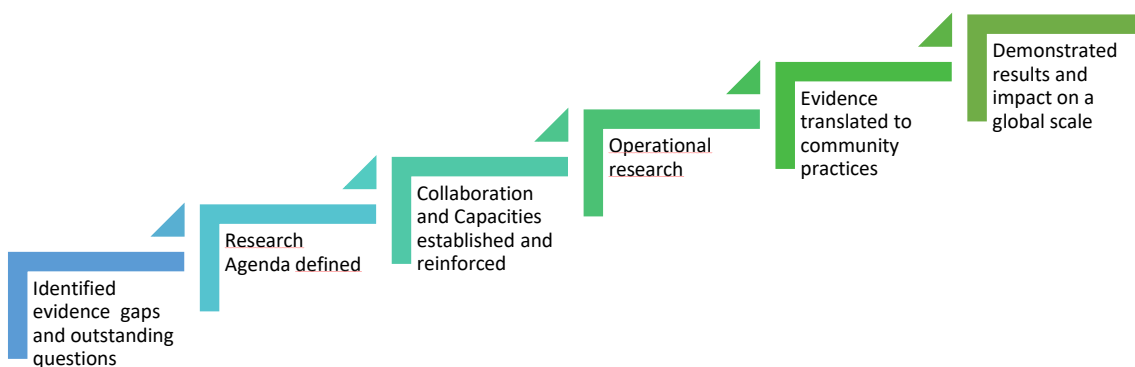
OUR CHALLENGE

The growing demand for assistance and the increasing number of people in need require not only more aid, but a new way of thinking to gain efficiency and value for money. The persistence of child malnutrition, the increase of humanitarian needs and the new challenges as the management of natural resources in a climate change context, call for new solutions and ways of working to accelerate prevention, early detection, and treatment efforts to address child malnutrition and protect households and communities more effectively, generating projects of value and return.

To tackle this challenge, we should work with established and new partners to draw ideas, expertise, and resources. Building an ecosystem of players with collaborative approaches to stimulate innovation and quality research.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

To progress in this challenge, we have defined six steps in our theory of change, outlining how we generate evidence to drive transformational change in practice and generate impact.



OUR OBJECTIVE

Guided by our theory of change and in partnership with other research actors, we create value by generating and synthesising evidence on effective and more equitable services to break the hunger cycle and develop solutions, which strengthen our capacity and lead to more programme opportunities and positioning.

OUR APPROACH

Effective responses to address child undernutrition and the underlying causes behind malnutrition must be defined based on stronger evidence oriented to accelerate the delivery of essential actions to address child undernutrition and improve our ability to protect communities, households, and children.

Our approach is structured in four levers that drive and structure the research strategy.



- **Operational Research.** Hunger is constantly evolving and requires us to evolve our operational capabilities and methodologies.
 1. Promoting community-based approaches to improve access to basic services, nutritious food, clean water and nutritional care. →For accessibility and coverage.
 2. Developing intervention methods for improving livelihoods resilience and management of natural resources from a community-based approach. →For protection and building capacities.
 3. Addressing gender inequality and reducing the gender gap. →For inclusion and participation.
- **Research Ecosystem.** Attract and engage. Promote networking to bring expertise, capacities, and resources to deliver quality research.
 4. Partnering for the design and implementation of quality research projects. →For quality and scientific method.
 5. Connecting and contributing to the global research agenda through initiatives such the [Global Action Plan on Child Wasting](#). →For leadership and positioning.
 6. Engaging the catalytic effect of the private sector. →For expanding opportunities and exploring new models.
- **Research Capacity.** Systematization for conducting research effectively, efficiently, and sustainably.
 7. Developing research and innovation capacities and integrating them into daily practice. →For skilling and competition.
 8. Geographical concentration of research in close collaboration with our missions. →For efficiency and maximising capacities.

- **Research Uptake.** Maximize the use and appropriation of the evidence and knowledge generated. Bridging the gap between scientific research findings, policy and practice.
 9. Influencing, connecting, and convening dialogues between practitioner, researchers, and others key stakeholders. →For accelerating change and influencing networks.
 10. Making visible and disseminating the evidence generated. →For gaining visibility and maximising results.

OUR RESEARCH AGENDA

Aiming to provide proven solutions at the local level, our research over the next five years will prioritize and be guided by three primary work streams to optimise efficiency in achieving optimal coverage for prevention, early detection, and treatment services to increase nutritional care, households' resilience and access to basic services through innovative actions. Considering the need for evidence to strengthen the community level and operationalise gender and climate change approaches.



1. **Healthy Lives.** Facilitating equitable and sustainable access to basic services and nutritional care, increasing the number of people we serve through cost-effective community-based approaches. For increasing accessibility, coverage, and sustainability.
2. **Sustainable Future.** Improving the resilience of households and communities to reduce nutritional risks. Enhancing efficient ways for managing natural resources and make agriculture sustainable and understanding the linkages and impact of climate change on food security and nutrition. For protecting the environment and building capacities.
3. **Inclusion & Equity.** Developing gender equality and inclusion approaches as a transformative lever to reinforce inclusive economic growth and social development for food and nutrition security. For promoting equality, participation, and transformation.

HEALTHY LIVES

Child undernutrition is a priority public health problem and undernutrition contributes to half of all child mortality¹.

We do research for Health.

With a focus on optimizing and simplifying nutritional treatment, making it easier, shorter, less costly, and more effective. We structure this stream research in the following priorities:

- Build evidence on simplifying and facilitating early nutritional diagnosis and the impact on coverage.
- Demonstrate and assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of strengthening Community Health Workers for community-led provision of effective essential services and nutritional care.
- Look for most cost-effective local alternative RUTF formulas.
- Identify social impact and coverage barriers for accessing to essential services and care. With particular focus on the treatment of child wasting by CHWs.
- Develop a framework of actions for the first thousand days of life (prevention of LBW, stunting, stimulation, psychosocial, etc.).
- Identify the role of poor WASH conditions in post-treatment relapse.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Today's undernourished will be tomorrow's poor²⁻³. Besides, climate change, natural resources management, environment and energy practices are eroding the future of the new generations.

We do research to protect the future.

Climate change, as a significant “hunger-risk multiplier”, brings a cascade of risks from physical impacts on (agro-)ecosystem, agricultural production, and food chains to economic and social impacts on livelihoods, income and trade, food security and nutrition. Increasing inequality, eroding local capacities, and affecting smallholder food production and water use. Research should be developed to accelerate and enable the design and

¹ Black R. E., Victora C. G., Walker S. P. et al. “Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries”. The Lancet, 2013. 382(9890): 427-451

² Hodinott J., Maluccio J. A., Behrman J. R. et al. “Effect of a nutrition intervention during early childhood on economic productivity in Guatemalan adults”. The Lancet, 2008. 371(9610): 411-416.

³ Alderman H., Headey D. D. “How Important is Parental Education for Child Nutrition?” World Development, 2017. 30(94): 448-464

implementation of essential actions that place prevention and resilience at the centre to protect communities, households, and children from undernutrition.

The need to build evidence is prioritized on:

- Essential actions for prevention and anticipation:
 - Identify the minimum set of interventions and their cost-effectiveness to effectively prevent malnutrition.
 - Improve and strengthen data and information for nutritional risk characterization, warning, and early action systems. Appraising the contribution of artificial intelligent and new technologies in overcome field constraints.
 - Understand the barriers to behaviour change and socio-economic factors that influence the hygienic and nutrition practices of infants, children, adolescents, and women at the community level.
 - Demonstrate the cost effectiveness of preventative minimum packages of sensitive nutrition actions to be implemented systematically together with nutritional treatment.
- Natural resources management and climate change adaptation:
 - Understand barriers for the adoption of improved agricultural practices for enhancing climate change adaptation and increasing the livelihoods resilience.
 - Identify context-specific vulnerabilities and enabling factors that strengthen health, food, protection, and WASH systems for nutrition protection.
 - Support the development of effective climate information to transition towards more climate-smart production systems and climate-resilient livelihood strategies,

INCLUSION & EQUITY

Gender equality matters for improved nutritional outcomes. And in reverse, and improved nutrition matter for gender equality⁴.

We do research so that everyone can grow up strong and healthy.

Discrimination against women and girls, including gender-based violence, economic discrimination, reproductive health inequities, and harmful traditional practices, remains one of the most pervasive forms of inequalities and one of the most important underlying causes of poor nutritional and health outcomes for women and children.

The development of effective solutions against hunger and undernutrition should be powered committing to gender, equality, women's empowerment, community

⁴ IFPRI. The Challenge of Hunger, Focus on Financial Crisis and Gender Inequality, Issue Brief 62, https://www.developmenteducation.ie/media/documents/ghi_briefing_paper%202009.pdf and Institute of Development Studies (2014) Gender and Food Security: Towards Gender-Just Food and Nutrition Security, Overview Report, BRIDGE Cutting Edge Programmes, <https://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/ids-document/A69889?lang=en#lang-pane-en>

participation and ownership and inclusion of excluded groups and responsiveness to special needs, including populations on the move.

From a gender-transformative approach to fighting hunger, we are looking for evidence on gender and social norms, roles and responsibilities, access to and control over resources, participation and decision-making, and gender-based violence. We prioritize the need of build evidence within this research stream in:

- Identify beliefs, practices, and perceptions for more equal participation of women and men as decision-makers regarding access to and control over assets
- Identify the influence of gender barriers and levers as determinants of food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Evidence the relationship and the impact of gender-based violence on food security and nutrition.
- Understand the influence of socio-cultural gender norms on the resilience of communities.
- Identify the impact and understand how specific interventions (such as cash transfer and promotion of women CHWs) influence the roles between men and women.
- Evidence the impact of household WASH management roles and responsibilities

OUR EXPECTED RESULTS

- **Health Life work stream**
 - Generated evidence for more accessible, optimized, and simplified treatment of child undernutrition.
- **Sustainable Future work stream**
 - Increased access to services and essential actions for prevention, anticipation and risk management.
 - Improved early detection of crises and identification of nutritional risks.
- **Inclusion & Equity work stream**
 - Identified gender barriers and levers for food security and nutrition.

INDICATORS

- # of active research projects (and # of research projects that are new this year)
- Total size of the multi-year research portfolio (€)
- # of publications on research projects (both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed)
- # of partnerships across research projects (# of which are new partnerships)
- # of dissemination activities internal/external to Action Against Hunger

ANNEX 1. KEY QUESTIONS

HEALTHY LIVES

Promote community-based approaches to optimize coverage and access to basic services and nutritional care.

Optimized and simplified nutritional treatment

Easier, shorter, less costly, more effective

Simplifying and facilitating early diagnosis

Strengthening CHWs in the provision of essential services and nutritional care

Most cost-effective alternative RUTF formulas

Identification of social impact, coverage and barriers to Access to essential services and care

? What impact would the use of age-adjusted MUAC as the sole diagnosis at the community level have on coverage?

What impact does the incorporation of SAM Photo as a diagnostic tool for CHWs have on coverage?

What are the local alternatives to RUTF and their cost-effectiveness in the treatment of acute malnutrition?

Which factors are associated with payment for services or products, besides socio-economic conditions?

Does the integration of CHWs in the treatment of malnutrition improve the efficiency of malnutrition management?

What are the complementary actions to the ICCM+ intervention to achieve greater impact on malnutrition –related morbidity and mortality at the community level?

What is the social impact of treatment of severe acute malnutrition by CHWs?

Which factors are associated with reliable service provision (6 months/2 years after construction or rehabilitation) in our areas of intervention?

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Resilience and prevention of malnutrition from a community-based approach

Essential actions for prevention and anticipation

Early warning for early actions
Nutritional risk characterization system

Prevention actions to be implemented together with treatment

Natural resources management and climate change adaptation

Climate change resilient agricultural practices

Interventions that strengthen system and provide access to quality nutrition

? How to apply artificial intelligence and machine learning to process multiple data sources and generate relevant information for decision making?

What is the effectiveness (and cost-effectiveness) of 'new WASH' measures during the treatment of malnutrition?

What are the factors influencing behavior change related to infant and Young children feeding at the community level?

What are the main risk pathways linking unsafe environmental hygiene to undernutrition?

What is the effectiveness of point-of-collection water treatment during CMCM programming?

What Will be the best agricultural practices in staple food production to reduce the negative impact of climate change?

What are the factors of climate change affecting smallholder food production and water use?

What are the anthropological and socio-economic factors influencing behavioral change in holistic management farming practices?

What is the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of BabyWASH for preventing chronic malnutrition

What is the role of WASH conditions in co-occurrence of wasting and stunting (WaSt)?

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INCLUSION & EQUITY

Addressing gender inequality and closing the gender gap

Empowering women to fight hunger

Identify gender barriers and levers as determinants of food insecurity and malnutrition

The impact of gender-based violence on food-security and nutrition



How does gender inequality influence food security and nutrition?

How do gender socio-cultural norms in communities influence resilience?

What is the impact of promoting women ASCs?

What impact does violence against women have on nutrition and food/water security?

How the household roles and responsibilities influence the WASH management?

What is the impact of cash transfers on gender roles in beneficiary communities?

What is the impact of poor WASH condition on MHCP?
(time spent in water collection = less time with children, etc)