



***RE: The 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (Special theme: Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development)***

**Written Statement from the Anglican Consultative Council,  
April 2021**

The Anglican Communion is the world's third largest Christian communion, comprised of 41 provinces across 165 countries representing 85 million members, all working in various capacities to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence, pursue peace and reconciliation, safeguard creation and act in loving service. The Anglican Consultative Council welcomes the theme of the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development.

A 2019 United Nations report stated that 821 million people suffered from hunger, while also facing increasing income inequality and economic downturns. In addition to ending hunger, achieving food security is critical to reducing vulnerabilities and promoting the health and sustainability of communities. Unfortunately, climate change, conflict, and socioeconomic shocks related to the COVID-19 pandemic have destabilised communities and threaten our ability to ensure food accessibility and proper nutrition for many around the world. Sustainable, adaptable and resilient forms of agriculture and farming must be implemented more widely, intentionally and urgently, so that communities can adapt to potential shocks and stressors, avoid impoverishment, and lead healthy lives.

Called to respond to human need by loving service, Anglicans and churches across the world are enabling sustainable nutrition and food security, supporting Agenda 2030 and the vision to leave no one behind. Based on experiences of churches rooted in communities and Anglican agencies working in humanitarian response and development, the Anglican Consultative Council submits the following priorities and recommendations to the Commission:

**Impact of climate change on food security**

Building resilience is vital to combating food insecurity in a world deeply affected by climate change. While climate change affects all countries and people, low-lying island states are disproportionately impacted. They are often doubly vulnerable, relying on agriculture for both sustenance and economic security. Increases in climate-related natural disasters and rising sea levels have damaged the homes and crops of the most vulnerable, leaving them at high risk of food insecurity and poverty. This also leads them to be dependent on imported goods, shifting them away from their traditionally nutritious diets and towards a diet of largely processed food. As a result, communities have seen unprecedented health complications like obesity, diabetes and childhood malnutrition.

Local populations must be connected to resources, strategies, and food sources that fulfill their nutritional requirements and mitigate the impact of climate- and health-related disasters. Churches are responding to this need. For example, the Anglican Church of Melanesia (covering the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia), launched a food security initiative in 2010 in response to devastation to the region's

crops caused by coastal inundation, floods and cyclones. The initiative distributes salt-water tolerant seedlings to various parts of Melanesia, educates farmers on the effects of climate change on their crops, and establishes protected and elevated nurseries that can withstand storms. The Anglican Consultative Council urges investment in climate resilient sustainable agriculture that reduces disaster risk, withstands climate-related changes, and ensures proper nutrition for a country's population.

### **The consequences of COVID-19 on population and nutrition**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted the poorest and most vulnerable and exacerbated hunger and food insecurity across the world. Mandatory lockdowns have delayed harvest, leaving many seasonal workers without livelihoods, with rural women and indigenous people particularly affected. COVID-19 is stretching the capacity of health care systems and hospitals, often shifting resources and care away from those suffering from other illnesses like malnutrition. Initiatives led by faith communities such as food banks and distribution as well as other forms of aid have provided sustenance and relief for those in crisis, addressing the exacerbated vulnerabilities left in the wake of the pandemic.

Examples of responses from across the Anglican Communion abound as churches and faith communities seek to address the risk of growing food insecurity. In South Africa, the Anglican Church has worked with the government in the poorest communities to identify and deliver food to those most in need. In Brazil, the Diocese of the Amazon has supported indigenous communities especially vulnerable to COVID-19. In Jordan, churches have connected with shop-keepers to obtain and distribute food parcels for Iraqi refugees. In Malaysia, churches have supported feeding programmes for migrant communities with no access to government provisions. Churches in the United States, India, Uganda, and the Middle East, among other places, launched a range of initiatives to support vulnerable people with feeding programmes, including the homeless. In the Philippines, churches commissioned out-of-work garment workers to sew Personal Protective Equipment for health workers. Following the principles of asset-based community development, churches are connecting farmers with unsold produce to cooperatives running community kitchens. Church buildings are also being used for processing food packs from the government and other aid organisations.

In these ways and more, churches have creatively and compassionately mobilised to meet the needs of communities affected by COVID-19 and its consequences, especially those out of reach of state and civic organisations, and should be key partners in ongoing recovery efforts. It is recognized that the devastating impact of the pandemic on livelihoods and food security, especially in those countries facing compounding challenges of changed weather patterns and failed harvests, will need a massive, multi-sectoral response.

### **Supporting resilience to end food insecurity**

The Anglican Consultative Council praises efforts across the United Nations system to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities to food insecurity, particularly in less-developed countries. Achieving enduring food security requires us to go beyond addressing hunger. It depends heavily on the construction of resilient, self-sustaining infrastructure. Populations should be supported to develop

resilient and sustainable farming methods to grow their own food and support their livelihood. Churches serve as safe spaces to share experiences and knowledge; thus, they play an important role in providing education and resources to create this infrastructure.

The Anglican Alliance, an umbrella organisation that brings together Anglican agencies and churches working in relief, development, and advocacy across the world, has developed the “Partners in Resilience and Response” initiative to share experience and best practice on resilience across the Anglican Communion. For example, Anglican churches across Zimbabwe, using a range of participatory processes, are enabling their communities to be more resilient to climate and socio-economic shocks and stressors. In January 2018, church leaders from across Zimbabwe participated in a Church and Community Mobilisation Process led by the Mothers’ Union. Participants gathered to explore and share experiences on what it means for individuals and communities to be resilient. The process has catalyzed individual and group projects that have increased household income, improved nutrition and self-reliance, decreased gender-based violence by supporting female income-earners, and strengthened relationships within the community. Decreased financial concerns have led to the spiritual growth of communities as they contribute to their collective well-being.

The Anglican Alliance has recently launched the Resilience Course, an online course for churches and communities across the Anglican Communion. The course offers an opportunity for clergy, lay, and practitioners to share learning, gain skills and exchange best practices for building resilience and to enhance their churches and communities’ ability to respond to a disaster. Church leaders from different parts of the world are thus enabled to build solutions together, while strengthening relationships and networks.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the experiences of Anglican churches and agencies working across humanitarian response and development to address food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition, and our contributions to sustainable development and Agenda 2030, the Anglican Consultative Council urges Member States, UN agencies, and civil society to:

1. Renew commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and accelerate action to fully achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030, with an immediate focus on the devastating impact of COVID-19 and providing food aid to the most vulnerable.
2. Recognise the positive role of faith communities in contributing to food security and ensuring balanced nutrition of communities, and consider them key stakeholders and partners in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts, achieving Agenda 2030, as well as in combating the multi-faceted impacts of COVID-19.
3. Include Agenda 2030 and food security in national development plans, encouraging the reduction of food waste and loss, as well as supporting farming and agriculture as economically and

environmentally sustainable practices, paying increased attention to the needs of women and girls, especially indigenous women and women living in poverty.

4. Commit to combating food insecurity in collaboration with other stakeholders which should include support for small farmers, investments in sustainable agricultural infrastructure, social protections for workers, and providing education for farmers on climate- and disaster-resilient, sustainable agricultural practices.
5. Incentivise sustainable farming as an economically viable livelihood, especially for young people whose livelihoods have been severely impacted by the pandemic, by encouraging young people to enter agriculture through rural financing options, creating opportunities in the sector, and ensuring the accessibility and affordability of healthy food.