

How we can put an end to global malnutrition by 2020

Malnutrition continues to afflict 180 million children worldwide and is responsible for in excess of 3.5 million maternal and child deaths each year. It leads to brain damage, immune system malfunction, weaker schooling attainment, lower workforce productivity, greater poverty and a greater susceptibility to chronic disease later in life. As a result of efforts by movements such as Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), nutrition is increasingly becoming a core development priority and it should be possible for the world to put an end to this crisis by 2020. However, realising this ambition will require:

- greater political leadership and commitment to tackling the problem;
- sustained funding from governments, businesses and private foundations to provide the \$10 billion per year required;
- improved accountability and transparency to ensure progress can be tracked and that citizens can hold their governments accountable to malnutrition commitments, including making social protection and agriculture more nutrition friendly;
- a commitment to address the wider global forces and structural inequalities that underpin the persistence of malnutrition.

Political leadership

IDS research shows that in countries with high levels of malnutrition, such as India, economic growth alone is not enough to prevent the devastating impacts of stunting (low height for age) and wasting (low weight for height). In many countries progress in fighting malnutrition has been limited by the absence of political leadership. The global hunger summit co-hosted by Prime Minister David Cameron and Brazilian Vice President Michel Temer this summer (which IDS played a key role in shaping) signalled a welcome commitment from political leaders to tackle the problem of malnutrition. It is essential that this momentum is sustained and built upon. The UK has a critical role to play in providing political leadership on this issue, particularly as it assumes the G8 presidency in 2013 at the same time as Ireland takes up the EU presidency.

A combination of new funding and redirected existing funding

Nutrition interventions have suffered from a severe lack of funding which has limited global progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to halve poverty and hunger by 2015. It is estimated that nearly \$10 billion of additional direct nutrition funding is required per year to make a significant dent in global malnutrition. We also need indirect nutrition interventions such as agriculture, water and sanitation and social protection to be more nutrition relevant. The increased level of funding required should come from a variety of sources including national governments and domestic revenues, traditional bilateral and multilateral donor funding, businesses and private foundations. These financial responsibilities need to be transparent so that funders can be held accountable to their commitments.

Improved accountability and transparency

A lack of visibility and transparency around nutrition aid has made it difficult for donors to be held accountable to their commitments. Improving transparency and equipping citizens and governments with the tools to hold each other to account is absolutely vital if progress to tackling undernutrition is to be accelerated. IDS are developing and measuring the effectiveness of a set of tools designed to bring undernutrition to the fore of policy and practice. These include the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HACI); work with Save the Children UK to scale up and evaluate systems for real time monitoring of nutrition amongst children in Northern Kenya using mobile technologies and researching how community feedback on the delivery of basic nutrition services can decrease levels of child mortality and morbidity in India.

Wider global forces and structural inequalities

Alongside the direct interventions required to tackle malnutrition, political leaders also need to demonstrate a greater commitment to assessing and addressing the wider global forces and structural inequalities that underpin the persistence of malnutrition. These include food price volatility and the factors shaping global food markets; the ongoing impact of climate change; the impact of the financial crisis and poor sanitation and access to basic services. An integrated response to these challenges is essential for accelerating progress towards tackling global malnutrition and improving the wellbeing of the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities.

About IDS and our work on nutrition

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a leading global charity for international development research, teaching and communications. We have particular expertise in the field of nutrition and we are actively researching on building political commitment to tackling undernutrition; mobilising resources for undernutrition reduction and promoting nutrition research uptake.

Key programmes of work on these issues include:

- **Accelerating Progress in Reducing Hunger and Undernutrition**

This programme focuses on how agriculture can deliver better nutrition outcomes by developing evidence-based policy options and tools for businesses, governments, NGOs and donors. The programme is funded by the UK Department for International Development.

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/idsproject/accelerating-progress-in-reducing-hunger-and-undernutrition>

- **Transform Nutrition**

IDS is a partner in the Transform Nutrition research consortium, launched this autumn, which is seeking to transform understanding of the problem of undernutrition and the solutions required to tackle it. <http://www.transformnutrition.org/>

- **Analysing Nutrition Governance**

This project provides new insights into how governance works to improve nutrition outcomes in the developing world, and how nutritionists, development actors, donors, civil society and the private sector can support government officials in sustaining long term political commitments.

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/idsproject/analysing-nutrition-governance>

- **Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI)**

A joint project between IDS, Action Aid, Trocaire and Save the Children which aims to make the extent of political commitment to hunger reduction, among both developing and developed countries, more transparent to all. The first set of HANCI data are due out in early 2013.

<http://www.hrcindex.org/>

- **Partnering for Better Food**

This programme aims to identify and support scalable public-private innovative partnerships in developing countries that bridge the gaps between agriculture and nutrition programmes to improve nutrition for the poor and undernourished. <http://www.ids.ac.uk/idsproject/partnering-for-better-food>

Further reading

- Haddad, L., Acosta, A. M. and Fanzo, J. (2012) '**Accelerating Reductions in Undernutrition What can nutrition governance tell us?**', *IDS In Focus Policy Briefing 22*, Brighton: IDS
- Haddad, L., Chandrasekhar, C. and Swain, B. (2012) '**Standing on the Threshold: Food Justice in India**', *IDS Bulletin* Special Issue, Brighton: IDS
- **Aid for Nutrition: Using innovative financing to end undernutrition**, Report written by Stephen Spratt, Research Fellow, IDS and published by Action Against Hunger (ACF International)
- **Aid for Nutrition: Can Investments to Scale Up Nutrition Actions Be Accurately tracked?**, Report written by Stephen Spratt, Research Fellow, IDS and published by Action Against Hunger (ACF International)