

# Scaling Up Nutrition



## Improving maternal and child nutrition during the 1,000 days between pregnancy and age two, and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement

### 1,000 DAY WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

The 1,000 days between pregnancy and age two offer a critical window of opportunity to establish a lasting foundation for health through adequate nutrition.

A focus on nutrition between pregnancy and age 2 is proven to yield a high return on investment. Leading economists, including Nobel laureates, have declared that five of the top ten most cost-effective solutions for development focus on improving nutrition.

- WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, 2010

The impact of poor maternal and child nutrition is lasting with consequences reaching beyond health, having the potential to reduce the economic output of countries by 2-3 percent annually.

- WORLD BANK, 2010

Improving nutrition is a precondition to achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating disease, empowering women and achieving universal primary education.

### CONSEQUENCES OF MALNUTRITION

Every year, malnutrition contributes to 3.5 million preventable deaths of children under the age of five.

- 1,000 DAYS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP, 2010

Malnutrition increases the burden of disease in developing countries, adding to the human and economic impact of diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS. In addition, malnourished infants and young children who survive to adulthood have an increased risk of developing obesity and chronic conditions, further devastating already fragile health systems.

Malnutrition magnifies the effect of every disease, including measles and malaria. The estimated proportions of deaths in which undernutrition is an underlying cause are roughly similar for diarrhea (61 per cent), malaria (57 per cent), pneumonia (52 per cent), and measles (45 per cent).

- FAO

Malnourished mothers often have malnourished children. Undernutrition among pregnant women in developing countries is responsible for 1 of 6 cases where infants are born with low weight.

Poor maternal and child nutrition during the 1,000 day window of opportunity inhibits both physical and intellectual development. Malnourishment contributes to diminished academic achievement during childhood, which translates into reduced earning potential as adults. The effects of poor early nutrition last long into adulthood, as individuals are less able to improve their own futures and to contribute to better lives for their children, families and communities.

- **1,000 DAYS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP, [www.thousanddays.org](http://www.thousanddays.org), 2010**

The number of children under five years affected by chronic under-nutrition (stunting, or low height for age) has risen to 200 million. Stunting affects 32.5 percent of children in developing countries, or nearly one in three. Geographically, more than 70 percent of malnourished children live in Asia, 26 percent in Africa and 4 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. 130 million children are underweight.

- **2011 WORLD HUNGER AND POVERTY FACTS AND STATISTICS, FAO, 2010**

Micronutrient deficiencies include: anemia (affecting 1.6 billion people) - mostly due to iron deficiency - which increases the risk of low-birth-weight babies, undermines physical capacity and contributes to 19 per cent of deaths during childbirth; iodine deficiency, which is the world's most prevalent, yet easily preventable, cause of brain damage, Vitamin A deficiency, which reduces body defences against infection (suffered by 190 million preschool children); and zinc deficiency, which impairs the immune system and kills 430 000 children annually.

- **WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, WHO E-LIBRARY OF EVIDENCE FOR NUTRITION ACTIONS (ELENA), 2010**

## **SCALING UP NUTRITION**

There is an urgent need to increase global investment in nutrition. As people around the world continue to face drought, natural disasters and other emergencies, an investment in maternal and child nutrition will improve our ability to respond to and overcome these crises.

Launched in 2010, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN) is an unprecedented global movement to improve maternal and child nutrition. With a focus on the 1,000 day window of opportunity, SUN is working to improve both direct nutrition interventions and to integrate nutrition into broader national health and development efforts.

In the past year, 20 developing nations have taken steps to scale up nutrition by prioritizing planning and resources to invest in the health and futures of pregnant women and children. While SUN represents an exceptional collective global commitment, the leadership shown by these developing countries is central to creating lasting change.

Through SUN Movement, which is led by the SUN countries, a wide range of development partners, UN system agencies, civil society and businesses are offering concerted and coordinated support for priority in-country actions. They are also helping national authorities to demonstrate the impact of their efforts.

The SUN Movement is supported through an international team (the "Transition Team"), backed by two reference groups (country partners and UN organizations - including UN-SCN<sup>1</sup> and UN-REACH<sup>2</sup>) and six task forces on (a) country support, (b) communications, (c) civil society engagement, (d) development partner engagement, (e) business engagement, and (f) monitoring and evaluation. The Transition Team is presently chaired by the UN Secretary General's Representative on Food Security and Nutrition. This arrangement is likely to change following an analysis of more permanent stewardship arrangements that is currently underway.

**1 UN Standing Committee on Nutrition**

**2 Coordinated support to national efforts for scaling up nutrition through four UN system agencies - FAO-UNICEF-WFP-WHO.**