

Ensuring effective nutrition programmes.

Some talking points for your visit or letter to your MP.

In October, we asked you to contact your MP about the UK's commitment to nutrition, as new funds will be needed in 2020 to reach global nutrition targets. This month, we are asking you to follow up this issue with your MP, to explain how the quality of UK-funded nutrition programmes is as important as the extent of the UK's support, so that resources are used as effectively as they possibly can be.

These talking points can be used to support your letter – though please explain why this issue matters to you in your own words.

- Undernutrition contributes to the deaths of 3 million children under five every year and
- damages the development of over 200 million more.
- 155 million children globally are too short for their age ('stunted'), often due to lack of nutrients, impairing their physical and mental development. 52 million children are too thin for their height (wasted).
- Poor nutrition harms almost every aspect of a child's early development, increasing susceptibility to deadly diseases, and reducing the child's ability to learn at school and to earn a living later in life.
- The UK is a leading global donor for nutrition. The quality of its programmes is as important as funding. DFID must ensure its programmes around the world are as effective as possible at tackling malnutrition.
- It is important to target all forms of malnutrition, and to reach everyone, including the most vulnerable, marginalised and hard to reach.
- The UK should also support countries themselves to tackle malnutrition, and build their capacity to do so, involving communities so that people have a say in their own governments' efforts to tackle malnutrition.
- Programmes must be based on evidence of what works, to ensure the highest possible impact on malnutrition and value for money.

How effective is DFID's nutrition work?

Since 2013, the year of Nutrition for Growth, the UK has significantly increased its investments in tackling malnutrition. In 2017, it produced a [Global Nutrition Position Paper](#), setting out its approach for nutrition spending until 2020:

“In line with the latest evidence, DFID will continue to support the scale-up of nutrition-specific services in the countries where it works, but will also increase the coverage and impact of nutrition-sensitive interventions. Providing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services together and in the same places where possible will help maximise impact on malnutrition. UK investments will leave no one behind by focusing on reaching the extreme poor, the most marginalised and those in fragile and conflict affected states. DFID will prepare for the future by supporting government leadership, capacity and system strengthening to deal with current and new challenges to nutrition.”

The principles of effective nutrition programming set out in [this month's action sheet](#) are broadly reflected here, and must continue to inform DFID's nutrition programmes into the future. **But we cannot assume that the principles behind 2017's position paper will remain when it expires in 2020.** In an ever-changing political context, DFID's maintaining these principles is not guaranteed. It is vital that DFID understand there is public support for a strong nutrition pledge, backed by evidence-based policies that focus on leaving no one behind.

In a recent report, [Concern Worldwide](#) mapped DFID's nutrition programmes against the global burden of malnutrition. It found that countries with high burdens of malnutrition are not being reached. A number of these countries that consistently rank low in terms of human development are fragile and conflict affected. Without adequate efforts to tackle hunger and malnutrition, millions of people in these countries will be unable to lift themselves out of poverty.

Effectively addressing malnutrition is fundamental to accelerating extreme poverty reduction. DFID's investments and leadership are a vital contribution to the global efforts on hunger and malnutrition. The UK on its own cannot fight the malnutrition battle, nor can it invest in nutrition in all countries in need. However, with rates of stunting as high as 58% in Burundi and 49% in Madagascar, and rates of wasting as high as 19% in Niger, for example, DFID and other donors must work to ensure these vulnerable populations are not left behind.

Around 8 out of 10 malnourished children live in middle-income countries. This 'silent emergency' is dictating the survival and potential of these populations, and the future of these countries.

Some of the countries with the highest malnutrition rates receive little investment in nutrition from any donor. DFID should not only review its own nutrition investments in these countries, but also work to influence other donors to coordinate strategies on addressing malnutrition in the worst affected places.

Globally, we are currently off track to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030. The overall volume and quality of efforts for nutrition needs a substantial scale up if we are to make progress towards ending malnutrition by 2030 and reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

See these [case studies](#) which show the human cost of failing to invest adequately in nutrition.