

# Funding the fight against malnutrition

Help the UK play a lead role in renewing support for global nutrition programmes.

Good nutrition is critical for a healthy and productive life. However, undernutrition plays a role in the deaths of nearly half of all children under five, and poor nutrition in early childhood impairs proper child development and learning, reduces resistance to disease, and stops children from reaching their full potential. Since 2013, the UK has played a big role in the global fight against malnutrition, hosting the first 'Nutrition for Growth' ('N4G') summit, which raised \$23 billion over 7 years for nutrition programmes. But the money pledged in 2013 comes to an end in 2020, and we are still a long way from meeting global nutrition targets. This year, the Government of Japan will host the next Global Nutrition Summit in December, with a 'pledging moment' for donors during the Olympic Games in July. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) has a strong record of funding nutrition programmes. To continue its powerful leadership role in the fight against malnutrition, the UK should pledge around £800 million for the next five years, a very slight increase on its existing level of support.

## The scale and impact of malnutrition

Millions of lives around the world are [blighted by malnutrition](#), caused by not having enough to eat, not eating enough of the right foods, or being unable to absorb nutrients from food. In 2018, of the 5.3 million children under the age of five who died, undernutrition was a contributory factor in nearly half those deaths. [Children who survive often suffer permanent effects](#) such as stunted development, and increased susceptibility to diseases. In 2018, 149 million children under the age of 5 were stunted (too small for their age and with impaired mental development). At the same time, low- and middle-income countries are witnessing a rise in child overweight and obesity. Malnutrition also disproportionately affects women and girls. Anaemia, often resulting from iron deficiency, affects 33% of all women of reproductive age, bringing with it health issues for women and their children.

Unless we tackle malnutrition in all its forms, the world will not be able to achieve the aim of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Malnutrition also affects the wider society. Undernourished children have reduced educational and employment prospects, holding back economic development. [It is estimated](#) that undernutrition in childhood reduces an individual's earning potential by 10% and has a total global economic cost of \$3.5 trillion.

## Prevention and treatment

There are many kinds of interventions that can help tackle malnutrition. These include "nutrition specific"

interventions which directly tackle malnutrition, such as vitamin or mineral supplements, and 'nutrition sensitive' programmes such as water, sanitation and hygiene or agriculture programmes that indirectly aid nutrition as well as achieving other development objectives, making more efficient use of existing aid spending. SDG2 aims to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition'. This means achieving the [2025 WHO targets for nutrition](#), agreed in 2012, which include a 40% reduction in the number of under-fives who are stunted and a 50% reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age. The [World Bank has estimated](#) that an extra US \$7 billion is needed each year to address stunting, wasting, anaemia and breastfeeding through nutrition-specific interventions by 2025.

To achieve these aims, more resources for nutrition are needed, and integrated approaches across different kinds of development intervention. For example, unless there is adequate support for nutrition, we cannot make the most of immunisation investments such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, as an undernourished child is less likely to benefit fully from vaccines.

## The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) agenda

The UK is a leading donor for nutrition. In June 2013, then Prime Minister David Cameron established the 'Nutrition for Growth' ('N4G') agenda, leading efforts to bring together governments, businesses, scientists and civil society to raise US \$23 billion of funding for nutrition over 7 years, increasing nutrition spending worldwide by 33%. At the 2013 N4G Summit, the UK

government committed an extra £375 million for nutrition-specific programmes and an extra £604 million for nutrition-sensitive programmes up until 2020. In the years since the 2013 summit, the number of children whose physical or cognitive growth is stunted by malnutrition has reduced by over 12 million. But despite this progress, nutrition remains one of the most pressing issues in global development.

### **The opportunity of 2020**

The next N4G moment will come in July around the Tokyo Olympic Games, at a 'pledging event' for international donors, which will be a springboard to the Global Nutrition Summit, also hosted by Japan, in December. This is a vital opportunity for the UK to demonstrate its continuing support for nutrition, particularly because, as of the end of 2020, no DFID funding is currently earmarked for nutrition.

If progress is to continue, it is vital that the UK once again takes the lead at Tokyo by pledging funds to at least the same level as has been the case since 2013. The UK should pledge £800 million per year for nutrition for the period 2021-2025. This represents a small increase on the £716 million per year that DFID has spent on nutrition on average since 2013. The small increase recognises inflation, the growth of the 0.7% aid budget as a result of UK economic growth, and the global shortfall in funding for nutrition.

### **Ending preventable deaths**

The UK has made a commitment to [prioritise ending preventable deaths](#) of mothers, new-born babies and children in the developing world by 2030. Prioritisation of health and nutrition will be necessary if the Government is to meet this commitment. Health and

nutrition are co-dependent issues. For example, children cannot benefit properly from vaccines if they are malnourished, and malnourished children are more susceptible to common diseases. The UK's commitment must therefore be supported by financial commitments and sufficient political will. The UK must be willing to seize the opportunities of 2020, including the Global Nutrition Summit, and the replenishment of Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance, making ambitious financial commitments to both.

### **What can I do now?**

If you've taken an action on nutrition over the last year, thank you! Now, we're asking you to write to Secretary of State for International Development, Alok Sharma MP, asking him to pledge £800 million per year for the period 2021-25, and to ask Prime Minister Boris Johnson to show political leadership by attending the pledging event in Tokyo in July.

In the next few days, the UK will have left the European Union, making Britain's position in the world of extra importance to the Government. The UK's support for global nutrition is an important part of this. It is possible that, before you have time to take action, a reshuffle of the political leadership may have taken place, and speculation is rife about a potential merger of the UK's international development and foreign affairs functions. Whoever is in charge of the UK aid budget in the coming weeks, it is vital that they see strong financial support for global nutrition as a key part of their mission to end preventable child deaths.

### **Thank you if you are able to take action!**

#### **Take action**

1. **Please write to the International Development Secretary, currently Alok Sharma MP.** Ask him to make a UK pledge of £800 million per year for 2021-25, to maintain the UK's leadership tackling global malnutrition. Please ask him to urge the Prime Minister Boris Johnson to attend the pledging event in Tokyo in July.

**Contact details:** Rt. Hon. Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State, Department for International Department, 22 Whitehall, London SW1A 2EG. Email: [DFIDCorrespondence@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:DFIDCorrespondence@dfid.gov.uk)

2. **Ask your friends to send [this letter](#)** to their MP, urging his or her support for a strong N4G pledge by the UK.
3. **Share [this petition](#) with your social networks**, including @AlokSharma\_RDG or you can tweet your support using #100WaysAidWorks, #UKAid

Please let us know that you've taken action by emailing Dela at [delanderson@results.org.uk](mailto:delanderson@results.org.uk).