

Nutrition facts and figures

Some talking points for your visit.

The month, we are asking you to visit your MP to explain the fundamental importance of good nutrition to overcoming poverty and maintaining healthy lives. It is also important that they understand how international development priorities are changing, and that a continued focus on nutrition is vital.

- 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.
- Improving nutrition not only saves lives; it transforms lives, particularly those of women and girls who are disproportionately affected by undernutrition. It helps people lead better and more productive lives, free from poverty.
- Every £1 invested in nutrition can yield at least £16 in return.
- Nutrition underfunding costs the global economy around \$3.5 trillion each year.
- The world is way off track to meet the global targets on nutrition. At the current rate of effort, we won't reach the ambitions of the Global Goals.
- To change the lives of millions of women and children worldwide, and to promote economic prosperity, we need to increase investments in nutrition.
- Aid priorities are changing as many countries get wealthier, and as nutrition is being included in broader health and development programmes. This could risk efforts to improve nutrition being diluted.
- The UK must continue its current spending on nutrition programmes, which are a vital part of our international development efforts.
- Increased spending is needed from 2020 to meet the Global Goals.

Case study: Stunting in Madagascar

2016: Miranto (left) and Sitraka are both 5 years old, born on the same day in Ambohidasy Itaosy village, Madagascar. Miranto has been in school for two years and has lots of friends, but Sitraka is chronically malnourished ('stunted') – he's much shorter than Miranto and looks half his age. He can't speak or go to school. Miranto's family fed him a variety of nutritious foods, but Sitraka's family was too poor, and malnutrition has irreversibly harmed his development.

Sitraka's mother Mariette explains how her son was born underweight: "The pregnancy went well," she says, "but I did not have enough to eat and I was working a lot. Even now, I sell what I can, but at times I only make 1,500 ariary (around 30p) a day. It is not enough to feed myself and my three other children. My husband works too, but he spends his money on drink. He cannot defecate standing up yet, and that will bother the other kids at school," his mother confides despondently. Sadly, at only 5 years old, the consequences of his malnutrition are impossible to reverse, creating a vicious cycle of multiple deprivations.



Photo credit: Tom Maguire/RESULTS UK

Case study: Papua New Guinea's malnutrition crisis



Source: Jo Chandler

July 2018: Samuel (left) is brought for his check-up at the nutrition clinic at Port Moresby general hospital. He was admitted to the children's ward a few weeks earlier with severe malnutrition and tuberculosis. Now back home and receiving high-energy foods, he is still too thin and underweight.

Papua New Guinea has the fourth-highest child stunting rate in the world, and malnutrition has been cited as the likely cause of up to 76% of hospital deaths of children.

Quality rather than quantity of food is the problem, with children either not getting the nutrients they need, or losing them to illnesses such as diarrhoea or intestinal worms. Vaccination rates are low, and children fall sick and use a lot of nutrients to combat infection.

While the fatality rates in hospitals is falling, there is an urgent need to ensure adequate nutrition in the child's first 1,000 days of life. With 80% of Papua New Guinea's population living on subsistence agriculture, women often don't have access to a healthy diet or clean water to prepare meals safely during pregnancy, and many lack an education. The Papuan Government has a plan to roll out nutrition programmes, but it needs support. However, they are not being prioritised by the country's international donors.