

Nutrition

Nutrition has a dramatic global effect on the mortality and morbidity of children under five years of age. It is estimated that undernutrition is the underlying cause of 35 per cent of under-five deaths. It causes low birthweight of newborns; underweight, wasting and stunting of children; and micronutrient deficiencies of mothers and children. Major diseases and health complications capitalise on the weakened immunity of undernourished individuals. According to *The Lancet*, children who are moderately underweight and severely underweight have an increased risk (2.5- and 9.7-fold, respectively) of dying from diarrhoea, pneumonia, measles and malaria. In the early stages of life, particularly during the first two years, undernutrition has irreparable effects. Lifelong cognitive and physical development is compromised, and general immunity is decreased. In addition, there is a negative impact on the child's future economic achievement.

The Facts

- 26 million children under age five are severely wasted (UNICEF 2009). About 1.5 million die from wasting each year (WHO 2009).
- 195 million children under age five suffer from stunting, a measure of chronic undernutrition that is the best predictor of human capital (UNICEF 2009).
- Iron deficiency impairs the mental development of more than 40 per cent of the developing world's infants and reduces their chances of attending or finishing primary school (Micronutrient Initiative).
- When children get enough vitamin A supplements, the child mortality rate drops by as much as 23 per cent in vitamin A-deficient populations (Beaton et al, 1993).
- Nutrition interventions rank among the top 10 development investments based on benefit-cost ratio (Copenhagen Consensus 2008).

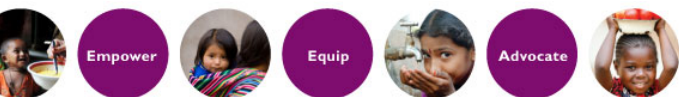


World Vision's Response

Nutrition is a central element of World Vision's global health and nutrition strategy. World Vision works within communities to improve the nutritional status of children by focusing interventions on two target populations--pregnant women and children under two years. If appropriate nutrition is not provided during this critical "window of opportunity", the effects of undernutrition on physical and cognitive development are largely irreversible. World Vision responds to and prevents undernutrition through a variety of evidence-based interventions selected to maximise positive outcomes for child well-being. The core set of integrated health and nutrition interventions make up World Vision's "7-11" strategy, comprised of seven key interventions for pregnant women and 11 key interventions for children under two years. In 2008, World Vision launched the **Nutrition Centre of Expertise (CoE)** to establish and maintain high quality nutrition technical expertise and leadership for nutrition programming throughout the World Vision Partnership.

Community-Based Approaches

Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) is a decentralised, community-based approach for treating acute malnutrition (also known as wasting) that was initially used in emergencies. In addition to the emergency context, World Vision now applies it in developmental contexts where high levels of severe acute malnutrition occur or where high numbers of severe acute malnutrition cases overwhelm the capacity of the local health services. CMAM promotes in-home treatment of children under five years using ready-to-use therapeutic food and has been shown to significantly reduce the number of children dying, increase coverage rates of children being treated and demonstrate cost effectiveness.



World Vision follows the **Positive Deviance/Hearth** method to identify well-nourished children living in vulnerable households and then learn through a Positive Deviant Inquiry of the positive behaviours that make the impact in the child's nutrition status. Those positive behaviours are then shared with other mothers in the community through peer-to-peer sharing and joint learning. This process usually takes place in the home, or "hearth," and involves instruction on specific methods of food preparation by either a volunteer or the mothers themselves.

World Vision promotes sound feeding practices through **infant and young child feeding (IYCF) strategies**, including promotion of exclusive breastfeeding. Essential nutrition actions include a sub-set of 7-11 proven interventions that World Vision supports at health facilities and in communities to improve the growth and micronutrient status of infants and children. These include exclusive breastfeeding, adequate and timely complementary feeding, appropriate nutritional care of sick and severely malnourished children, and adequate intake of vitamin A, iron and iodine. Deficiencies of **micronutrients** cause health problems, and even death. World Vision addresses these issues through supplementation, home-based (e.g. Sprinkles) and other food fortification, as well as through interventions to address diseases (e.g. de-worming, and improved water and sanitation facilities) and food insecurity issues (e.g. home gardens, increasing indigenous foods and animal source foods).



Key projects

World Vision is treating acutely undernourished children in areas with high rates of severe acute malnutrition through Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) in eight countries: **DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan** and **Zimbabwe**. CMAM is applied as the response to areas in these countries where levels of wasting are greater than 10 per cent, or where the numbers of children with severe acute malnutrition are high and exceed the capacity of the local health service. World Vision has treated more than 75,000 children in CMAM programmes over the past three years.

Through the Academy for Educational Development-led Alive & Thrive project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, World Vision is dedicated to reducing undernutrition and death caused by sub-optimal infant and young child feeding practices in **Bangladesh, Ethiopia** and **Vietnam**. Anticipated impacts are 72,000 lives saved, 4 million additional infants exclusively breastfed and stunting prevented in 1.2 million children through improved complementary feeding.

As part of humanitarian response to the **Haiti** earthquake, World Vision has established "baby-friendly areas" to provide breast-feeding support and counselling for women and their infants. World Vision has also assisted the affected population with basic food assistance. By partnering with United States Agency for International Development and World Food Programme, general food rations have been provided to more than 300,000 families.

Advocacy and Policy

World Vision is an active participant in global nutrition advocacy and policy initiatives, e.g. REACH partnership, Global Nutrition Cluster, Standing Committee on Nutrition working groups. In addition, World Vision has launched a global advocacy campaign, "Child Health Now", in which reducing child undernutrition is one of three key themes.

For general information about World Vision's health, nutrition, and HIV and AIDS work, please contact:

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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.