

# ONE GOAL

*nutrition for every child.*

## Fuelling Asia's footballers for the future

One goal to level  
the playing field



# Foreword

'Unfortunately, Asia, especially South Asia has the highest number of malnourished children in the world. This has huge implications for individual health outcomes, national growth and long-term development. We have tried a lot of different strategies to combat malnutrition but it has been a struggle to reach every child and community, especially those who are marginalised. The One Goal campaign is a powerful means to reach out to grassroots levels and to combine this with sports, particularly football that can have an enormous impact. This report well describes how much Asian countries need to focus on the health and well-being of their children and engage in concerted action to reduce malnutrition. We hope football can be the convener that brings action to nutrition and help make our children both healthy and active.'



**Professor Zulfiqar A. Bhutta**  
Chair – Department of Paediatrics and  
Child Health, the Aga Khan University,  
Pakistan

'We know that investments in nutrition are a way to improve economic growth. Undernourished children start school later, learn less in school, repeat grades more often, and do not reach their full potential to contribute to the economy. Undernutrition increases the burden of health-care costs, and adversely affects quality of life. Undernutrition throughout the 20th century may have cost the developing world as much as 8 per cent of GDP. The One Goal campaign is a great way to engage people on the importance of reducing undernutrition. The potential impact of this is enormous in a region like South Asia, for example, where GDP loss due to undernutrition has been conservatively estimated at an annual rate of 4 per cent of GDP (equivalent to approximately US\$100 billion at current exchange rates).'



**Sue Horton**  
Associate Provost, Graduate Studies,  
University of Waterloo  
Chair – Global Health Economics,  
the Centre for International  
Governance Innovation

# Preface

We all know that feeling of exaltation and sense of achievement when the ball hits the back of the net, the spectators jumping from their seats in celebration and the team shouting for joy at a game well played. It is with this same excitement that the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and the Asian Football Development Project (AFDP), along with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Royal DSM and World Vision International (WVI) is running out on to the pitch to fight the wide-spread problem of poor nutrition.

When groups of people come together with One Goal, change happens. Across Asia men and women, girls and boys alike are getting together every day to play football, educate young players and train for a more healthy and balanced lifestyle. The grassroots football network is booming in our cities and villages, and more and more girls are taking part. The opportunities for transformation amongst our young people are unsurpassed.

We are in the privileged position to be leading Asian football into the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This is an historic time for our children and an opportunity to show what a crucial role a healthy diet plays in our development – both as individuals and as a region. We are at the bottom of the global league when it comes to nutrition in Asia. The fact that millions of children are born every year that are unable to compete physically and mentally alongside their peers should be a wakeup call for our governments, health professionals and community leaders. But on a daily basis, we both witness first-hand the power of this beautiful sport to empower communities, create social change and educate fans and players alike.

From an early age, football has taught us to be passionate advocates for the sport and its power to address some of societies' greatest challenges – the greatest challenge of today is giving our children the best start in life. Together we must work to end the poverty and lack of education, and end malnutrition, which is damaging our children before they're even born and as they grow.

This report sets out the case for a balanced healthy diet for all and offers tangible solutions that will level the playing field and give boys and girls born today the start in life they deserve. As a team, with the support of all countries represented by the AFC, we can score the One Goal that can transform a generation.



**One Goal Board Chairman**  
**HRH Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein**



**One Goal Board Co-Chairman**  
**Trihadi Saptoadi**

# Executive summary

Millions of children born in Asia enter the world at a disadvantage compared to children elsewhere. The nutritional playing field is shockingly uneven, with millions of children born each year carrying the burden of poor nutrition and the irreversible damage it can cause throughout their whole life. One-quarter of Asia's 350 million children under the age of 5 are underweight, while approximately 100 million are stunted because they do not consume the nutrients needed to develop properly. At the same time, 16.5 million under-5 children in Asia are overweight and obese. This number is expected to rise to 23.1 million by 2025.<sup>1</sup> This double burden of malnutrition has emerged in the wake of Asia's economic transition, resulting in high numbers of malnourished children.

Across the region, boys and girls are not able to compete with their peers because they have been malnourished from the very beginning, lacking vital vitamins and minerals, called micronutrients, as well as macronutrients such as protein, fat and energy. Poor nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life, starting from the point of conception to a child's second birthday, can set back physical and mental development for a lifetime. Every stage of a child's development requires the right fuel to help the body grow strong and resilient to infection and disease. Poverty, poor accessibility of nutritious foods, limited understanding of good nutrition, and low levels of breastfeeding all mean that Asia's children are not given the same 'sporting chance' to reach their potential as those in other parts of the world.

This report demonstrates the significance of a growing network of grassroots football clubs across Asia which can transform the eating habits of children and adolescents across Asia, while educating their parents about good nutritional practices. By leveraging the emergence of grassroots football networks across Asia the One Goal campaign will promote research into the fields of sport and nutrition, while strengthening the use of football as a tool for development and community outreach. The report looks ahead to the FIFA World Cup in 2022 in Qatar, charting the nutritional status of children in selected member countries of the AFC. 'Red cards' are assigned to those countries that have high burdens of both undernutrition and overnutrition, yet are undertaking action to improve their game when it comes to nutrition policy and practice. 'Yellow cards' are assigned to those countries assessed as emerging onto the field with respect to commitments to nutrition policy and practice.

The One Goal campaign has a vision of contributing to healthier children, fans and football players across Asia. It is calling for the support of national governments, the corporate sector, civil society, the general public and **football fans globally** to leverage the power and passion for football to tackle the double burden associated with poor nutrition that is holding back Asian children.



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# The equaliser

It has been argued that sport contributes to development in multiple ways:

*Leading international bodies have formally recognised sport as a contributor, alongside other interventions, to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to address social, economic and development challenges and global public health.<sup>2</sup>*

The United Nations (UN) considers sport so crucial to social and community cohesion that more than 10 years ago it formed a task force on sport and development for peace. The group encourages its agencies to integrate sport into all of its work in order to achieve the MDGs – eight global targets to eradicate or reduce poverty, hunger, child mortality and disease, and to promote education, maternal health, gender equality, environmental sustainability and global partnerships by 2015.

This makes sport everyone's territory, not just developed nations or the middle classes within them. However, just as with many other elements that facilitate social cohesion and development, sporting prowess is not represented equally across communities and societies. A child born today into a poor community in an Asian country will not have the same opportunities to participate and develop through organised sport as his or her counterpart in Europe or North America.

Although 'sport is not a panacea for global social and economic challenges',<sup>3</sup> it has been described as a 'valuable cross-cutting tool'<sup>4</sup> that has the potential to strengthen established development approaches. Furthermore, as outlined in a report from the UN's Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace:

*Life skills learned through sport helps empower individuals and enhance psychosocial well-being, such as increased resiliency, self-esteem and connections with others. These features of sport are beneficial to people of all ages, but they are especially vital to the healthy development of young people.<sup>5</sup>*

Football can also help break down stereotypes and challenge entrenched discrimination.

*The practice of sport is vital to the holistic development of young people, fostering their physical and emotional health and building valuable social connections. It offers opportunities for play and self-expression, beneficial especially for those young people with few other opportunities in their lives.<sup>6</sup>*

In addition, the opportunity to influence and educate girls in particular has never been greater. It is 'through sport, girls are given the chance to be leaders and improve their confidence and self-esteem.'<sup>7</sup> This has been demonstrated by initiatives such as those run by the Centre for Equality and Inclusion (CEQUIN), which launched a football club for girls in association with the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in June 2011. It took three months to persuade close to 100 girls to take part but, since then, there has been a steady increase in the number of players. Most of the girls are playing a physical sport for the first time and the centre reports a growth in the girls' enthusiasm and skills.<sup>8</sup> With a number of AFC countries appearing at the bottom of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, and India being the lowest-ranked of the BRIC economies,<sup>9</sup> there is still a way to go, but girls' education and empowerment are crucial for improving nutrition amongst mothers and their children.

The most recent FIFA Big Count (2006) highlighted the participation of 26 million girls and women in football. This demonstrated a significant 50 per cent growth from the year 2000<sup>10</sup> – a trend that is expected to continue. The 2014 AFC Women's Asian Cup in Vietnam, proudly supported by One Goal, offers a unique opportunity to promote good nutrition practices to girls who can become the educated mothers of the future.

*'Female players can play such a crucial role to inspire and provoke others. Young girls listen to successful female athletes and what they have done with their lives. Youth clubs should be more than about winning a game at the weekend. They can create a safe environment, where players feel comfortable and confident and encouraged to grow in every aspect of their lives.'*

**–Tom Sermanni, Head Coach of the U.S. Women's National Football Team and Asian Coach of the Year 2007**



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