

WFP and Nutrition

Right Food at the Right Time



World Food Programme

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Nearly 200 million children under five in the developing world are chronically undernourished or stunted, while the number of underweight children is close to 130 million.¹ By maximising the nutritional impact of its food assistance programmes to more than 90 million people every year, WFP has a unique opportunity to strengthen the next generation as we fight hunger and malnutrition worldwide.

Scientific evidence has shown that chronic undernutrition in the first two years of life leads to irreversible damage, meaning that children may never reach their full mental and physical potential. Poor nutrition can affect school performance, economic productivity and earning power in adult life.

But the battle against child undernutrition is urgent and winnable. There is a window of opportunity from conception to two years old when good nutrition can make all the difference. We need to build and nourish the next generation.

Feed People Better, Feed People Smarter

WFP's new and improved approach to tackling child undernutrition emphasises prevention, especially among children under two. And WFP is targeting its food interventions to make sure that children, and adults, get the right food at the right time.

WFP's ability to deliver the optimum food/nutrition balance has — until relatively recently — been limited to basic food commodities such as cereals, fortified cereal flours, oil (fortified with vitamins A and D), pulses, sugar and iodized salt, alongside

more specialised fortified blended foods such as corn-soya blend (CSB).

Now, WFP is:

- improving the quality of the fortified blended foods we provide
- developing formulas for micronutrient powders for home fortification
- exploring how to fortify staple foods such as rice
- piloting the use of ready-to-use foods for preventing or treating moderate acute malnutrition
- exploring the option of complementary food supplements.

WFP Steps Up to the Nutrition Challenge

WFP is rapidly expanding the number of young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers receiving nutritionally enhanced foods. WFP increased the number of children in the critical under-two age group it reached with specialised nutrition products from 55,000 in 2008 to more than 2.5 million in 2010 – a 45-fold increase.



¹ *Tracking Progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition*, UNICEF, 11 Nov. 2009

Maximising the Nutritional Impact of our Food Interventions

The world has the knowledge and technology to make huge strides in eradicating malnutrition, using products and services available today, or innovating new ones for tomorrow. WFP is taking advantage of recent advances in science and technology, such as progress in the areas of fortification as well as the production of ready-to-use foods (RUFs). We are employing new technologies to maximize the nutritional outcomes of the food we provide.

In Emergencies, More Lives can be Saved with the Delivery of Life-saving Micronutrients

Missing nutrition targets in emergency situations means possibly losing an entire generation and hampering long-term development of the country.



When a child under two chronically lacks the right nutrition, mental and physical damage is irreversible. This lack of nutrition makes the child more susceptible to illness throughout his or her life and a less productive member of society. And during emergencies, not only does the vulnerability of children increase, but the incidence of disease also goes up. This is a double threat to health and well-being.



Investing in Children is Investing in the Future

Children who suffered from chronic malnutrition when they were small may live with a high risk of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, in later life. The health care costs of treating such diseases, as well as the losses to national economic prosperity, are much higher than the sum needed to invest in preventing undernutrition in the first few years of life.

Treatment of malnutrition is getting easier — new food-based nutrition interventions have been developed, such as ready-to-use therapeutic foods for severe acute malnutrition.

Growing interest in tackling child hunger is prompting the development of new food-based products to treat and prevent forms of undernutrition.

Micronutrient Powder

In many developing countries, where diets are not diverse, children often fail to receive essential micronutrients required for healthy growth and development. Through home-fortification programmes, WFP provides families with Micronutrient Powder (MNP), which contains the vitamins and minerals essential for bodily functions, growth and immunity. They are sprinkled on food just before eating. In 2010, WFP used MNPs in over ten countries, including in some school feeding programmes. Preliminary evaluations in Haiti found that anaemia prevalence fell 30 percent among children under two where MNPs were used.

'We have shown that the evidence for benefits from nutrition interventions is convincing. What is needed is the technical expertise and the political will to combat undernutrition in the very countries that need it most.'

UK medical journal, The Lancet, 'Maternal and Child Undernutrition'

Building Partnerships for Better Nutrition

WFP recognizes that food can make an even greater impact on the lives of people when it is part of a food, health care and service delivery package. Partnerships with governments, UN agencies, NGOs, private sector companies, policy institutions and private foundations are therefore central to WFP playing its part in delivering the best nutrition possible.

Our partnerships with the private sector have been critical in the recent development of new nutritionally-enhanced food products. Partnerships facilitate the use of innovative approaches and techniques to develop appropriate, safe and effective nutrition interventions. Partnering with the private sector has also been a powerful tool in WFP's joint advocacy efforts to fight hunger and undernutrition.

At the country level, bringing together all main stakeholders has proven beneficial in maximising nutrition results, and is more cost effective in the long-term. Our extensive

deep-field presence allows us to engage with host governments and partner organisations at the local and national level to develop effective and appropriate policies and programmes.

A groundbreaking example of an effective country-level coordination process is the REACH partnership, which WFP currently hosts at its headquarters. Jointly established by FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO in 2008, REACH facilitates a country-led process for comprehensive needs assessments, advocacy, action planning, and coordination amongst stakeholders to deliver an integrated multi-intervention approach to address childhood undernutrition.

Working with Private Partners: The Case of Project Laser Beam

Project Laser Beam (PLB) harnesses the power of global, regional and local companies to work together with the UN to radically reduce child undernutrition. Initially focusing on Bangladesh and Indonesia, this US\$50 million, five-year pilot project will combat undernutrition through food, hygiene and behavioural change. The aim is to create a sustainable, scalable and replicable model that will target similar populations in need across the globe.

'We know why we need to improve nutrition for all children. We know how. Now we need to unite and do it.'

Josette Sheeran, WFP Executive Director

In 2009, the World Bank estimated that just US\$11.8 billion would be needed annually to meet the needs of the world's undernourished. Just US\$3.6 billion of this would give all children 6-23 months the micronutrient fortified or enhanced complementary foods they need to prevent and treat moderate malnutrition.



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