



a global partnership to **end child hunger** and undernutrition

UN agencies, NGOs, civil society and the private sector are working together to launch a global effort to effectively end child hunger and undernutrition within a generation.

Worldwide, about 350 to 400 million children (under 18) are today suffering from hunger. The impact is lifelong damage to their health and quality of life as well as reduced productivity and national economic performance.

Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition is a global partnership which seeks to focus the world's attention, will and resources squarely on the problem of hunger and undernutrition and its impact on children; to increase understanding of what can be done address the problem — what is required and from whom, when, where and how; and on advocating that it is our collective responsibility to respond to this “silent emergency” with urgency.

There is a “silent emergency” in child hunger...

While hunger respects no age barrier, it is wreaking a disproportionate impact on children, with dire consequences for current and future generations.

In many communities **chronic hunger is “inherited”** — the impact of undernutrition on pregnant and lactating women severely restricts their children's lifelong capacity for physical growth, intellectual development, and economic productivity — perpetuating a vicious cycle of inter-generational hunger and poverty.

In countries where child hunger and undernutrition are most prevalent, there is a staggering cost to national and economic development, estimated globally at between **US\$20-30 billion per annum**, accumulating over the lifetime of today's undernourished children to between US\$500 billion to US\$1 trillion in lost productivity and income.

Some countries are estimated to be foregoing 2 to 3 percent of annual GDP due to malnutrition.

- There are an estimated **350 to 400 million children** under 18 suffering from hunger in the world today.
- WHO/UNICEF estimates **149 million children** under five are underweight — a key indicator of undernutrition.
- Between **five and six million under-fives** die each year from diseases which they could have survived if they were not undernourished.
- **73 percent** of the world's underweight under-fives live in just ten countries.

Yet hunger and undernutrition can be overcome...

Investment in nutrition reduces poverty by boosting productivity throughout the life cycle and across generations.

As successful experiences in recent decades in countries like **Chile, Thailand** or **Brazil** show, dramatic progress can be achieved by focusing on the nutrition of children and pregnant and lactating mothers, building a bedrock for further social and economic development. Even in **India**, which still has around 39 percent of the world's underweight children under five years, undernutrition has declined by about 30 percent since 1960.

// Can we build a world where every child can strive to realize their potential, freed from the blight of under-nutrition and stunting? I believe we can. //

Josette Sheeran,
WFP Executive Director

END CHILD HUNGER? IT HAS BEEN DONE:

- Between 1960 and 2004, **Chile** cut its underweight rate from 37% to 2.4%
- **Thailand** reduced malnutrition from 36% to 13% in the 15 years to 1990,
- **Brazil** decreased its child undernutrition by 67% between 1970 and 2000;
- Malnutrition in **India** has declined by about 30% since 1960
- Between 1980 and 1990, **Tanzania** reduced child malnutrition from 50% to 30%

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// At least 20 million babies are born underweight every year in developing countries, which puts them at a higher risk of an early death. With so much at stake, we are long overdue for a different approach. //

Ann Veneman,
UNICEF Executive
Director, addressing
the US Senate.

OUR GOAL:

- to eliminate child hunger and undernutrition within a generation

OUR TARGET:

- to cut the current global prevalence of child underweight in half by 2015.

FIND OUT MORE:

- Contact the **Ending Child Hunger & Undernutrition Initiative** in Rome on +39 (06) 6513 3008

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Trends are positive, but progress is insufficient

While globally overall trends are positive (eg. the number of underweight children under five has actually fallen from a peak of 221 million in 1980 to 149m in 2006), progress is insufficient, some countries are **falling further behind**, and in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa things are actually getting worse. Despite pockets of progress, millions of children succumb each year due to hunger and undernutrition while millions more children, families and communities struggle against a situation that threatens to overwhelm them.

Linking families-in-need with those who can help

The operational focus of the initiative is squarely on supporting national and community efforts to address the critical needs of some 100 million households — home to between 350-400 million hungry children under 18 — To grow healthy children these **families need access** to health, hygiene and nutrition education, programmes which emphasise maternal care, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and promoting proven interventions suitable for rapid scale-up, such as:

- micronutrient fortification and supplementation;
- ready-to-use therapeutic foods
- household water treatment; hand-washing with soap;
- parasite control measures (particularly de-worming and bed nets); and
- household food security measures such as homestead food production.

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals

The initiative seeks better coordination, better coherence, and better targeting of current efforts coupled with the promotion of a basket of successful interventions, to get the world back on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Our mid-term goal is MDG-1: to halve hunger* by 2015.

The success of five other MDGs will be strongly affected on our progress on hunger: MDG-2 – education, MDG-3 – gender, MDG-4 – child mortality, MDG-5 – maternal health, MDG-6 – diseases.

A global partnership to end child hunger

UNICEF and **WFP** have been close and effective collaborators for many decades, both in emergency relief and rehabilitation and in long-term development programmes. WFP is the United Nations' frontline agency on hunger and the largest humanitarian agency in the world, with unmatched field presence and first-hand knowledge of the plight of the hungry poor. UNICEF's mission to advance humanity and protect the rights and well-being of children everywhere has guided over six decades of commitment and action on behalf of children and families.

Now, in **2007**, the Executive Boards of WFP and UNICEF have resolved to dedicate their respective agencies to work together to address child undernutrition; to build a global partnership with peak NGOs, other international agencies, international financial institutions, civil society and private sector leaders, and national governments to focus awareness on the causes and magnitude of this problem, and on mobilising action to enact realistic, effective solutions.

Partners are committing to work ever more closely together to address the problem of child hunger where it is most urgent, among those communities most affected, reaching out to those families where the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger continue to exact an awful toll.

The international community is working with affected countries, their communities and families in a coherent, focused effort to end child hunger and undernutrition. Will you join us?

* As indicated by the prevalence of underweight among children under 5.