



The Right Food at the Right Time

WFP and Nutrition in Asia



World Food Programme

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Poor nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life – from the womb to two years of age – can lead to irreversible damage to children’s minds and bodies.

One third of all child deaths are related to under-nutrition. Undernourished children are more likely to get sick, have trouble concentrating in school, and may often earn less as adults.

In short, millions of children across Asia are being handed a life sentence at a time when the battle against child malnutrition is winnable.

The World Food Programme in Asia is targeting its food assistance to make sure that children and adults get the right food, at the right time, in the right place.

WFP Asia is at the forefront of the search for innovative solutions to maximise the nutritional impact of the food we provide. New, specialised ready-to-use food products are currently being distributed or developed in 12 countries in the region.





A mountain to climb

There are more malnourished children in Asia than on any other continent. Rapid economic development in recent years has lifted millions out of poverty, but many millions more remain locked in a daily battle to put food on the table.

Across WFP's countries of operation in Asia, nearly 100 million children under five years of age are 'stunted', or too short for their age. Stunting cannot generally be reversed or treated, but it can be prevented.

A further 37 million children under five in Asia are 'wasted' – acute malnourishment evidenced by recent weight loss. The effects of wasting can be reversible with treatment, and the condition prevented by the provision of specialised nutritious products at key stages in a child's development.

WFP is mandated to address stunting, and both to prevent and treat moderate acute malnutrition. In 2010 there were 3.3 million children under five (as well as 1 million pregnant or nursing mothers) enrolled in WFP nutrition programmes in Asia – that is just a fraction of those requiring assistance.

WFP also targets micronutrient deficiencies through fortified food products. Micronutrient deficiencies are a particularly acute problem in Asia, especially among pregnant women and young children.



You know it makes sense

At its most destructive, malnutrition kills. But in its silent, pernicious manifestations, it destroys potential, and undermines development.

The World Bank estimates that individuals lose more than 10 percent of lifetime earnings due to under-nutrition, and that the effects of malnutrition can cost a country two to three percent of GDP.

Five of the top ten most cost-effective solutions for development focus on nutrition (Copenhagen Consensus, 2008). Countries such as Brazil, where child malnutrition levels plummeted more than 70 percent in less than six years, have shown how quickly real progress can be made. Across Asia, governments are increasingly adopting enlightened and aggressive policies designed to tackle under-nutrition at its root.

Investing in the fight against malnutrition makes sense, and WFP is perfectly placed to deliver.

Moving with the times

The prevention and treatment of malnutrition is getting easier. New research has driven the development of new food products specifically designed for purpose.

WFP in Asia has led the drive to develop and manufacture ground-breaking formulas for ready-to-use supplementary foods (RUSFs), using locally acceptable base ingredients such as chickpeas and almonds to ensure acceptability in target populations.

Newly reformulated Super Cereals are enhanced with essential micronutrients and are more effective than ever in combating malnutrition. Micronutrient powders allow people assisted by WFP to fortify their meals at home after cooking, giving existing food supplies an additional nutritious ‘punch’.

The development and adoption of fortified rice is also being championed by WFP, as part of efforts to make nutrition gains in the broader population through improving the nutritious content of the region’s most commonly consumed staple.

More than ever before, these new technologies mean the end of child malnutrition need no longer be a dream, but a reality in our lifetime.



Pakistan

Fighting malnutrition in emergencies



WFP/Liz Loh-Taylor/Pakistan

Shakoora is four but looks younger. She and her one-year-old sister Nasmina were enrolled in a WFP nutrition programme in Sanghar district of Pakistan's Sindh province after being screened by a visiting health team.

As part of the programme, her mother Hazar Bibi received training in practical hygiene and household sanitation.

Hazar Bibi and her family were homeless for three months following severe flooding in 2011, their cotton crop destroyed and their animals and food stocks washed away.

Like Nasmina, Shakoora has been receiving nutritious Acha Mum to help her recover from her malnourished state. The product – developed in Pakistan by WFP – is well liked by children, as it is based on chickpeas, which are a common part of the local diet.

“Shakoora was very weak, but after eating this food she is much more active – her health is improving,” says Hazar Bibi. “I am also following the guidelines I have been given on breast-feeding, hand-washing and latrine use, and the health of all my family is improved. We always try and keep our house clean.”

Lao PDR

A national drive to end child malnutrition

San lives in Ban Mokchong, a village of only 47 households in Luangnamtha province, in the north-eastern corner of Lao PDR. She married at the age of 17 and Souvanna is her first child.

Souvanna is one of more than 600 children aged 6 to 23 months who get a daily ration of Plumpy'doz to help ensure they receive the nutrients they need during this critical developmental period.

“My daughter really loves the food,” San says. “I give her three spoons a day after meals, as recommended by the health centre staff, but she would eat much more if I let her.”

Indeed, as soon as San takes out the tub containing the peanut-based paste used to prevent malnutrition, Souvanna reaches for it excitedly.

The peanut-based paste is not only delicious, it is packed with essential vitamins and minerals, and also gives Souvanna the protein, fat and energy she needs to grow up strong and healthy.

WFP's vision for Lao PDR is a country free from under-nutrition and its debilitating impact on human potential and national development.



DPR Korea

Local production for nutritious results

The North Korean diet is monotonous and lacking in some vital elements, especially proteins, fats and micronutrients. The result is widespread stunting (children too short for their age) and compromised development of brain and body.

Since 1998, the in-country production of specialised nutritious foods has been at the heart of WFP efforts to address under-nutrition in the country. A network of factories produces fortified biscuits and Super Cereals that are enriched with vitamins and minerals and distributed to children and their mothers.

WFP regularly revises the DPRK recipes and explores opportunities to develop new products in the light of the latest research on diet and nutrition.



Twice the impact

Working with UNICEF

Under an agreement with UNICEF, WFP has the mandate to address moderate malnutrition, while UNICEF focuses on severe malnutrition. As part of a joint effort, WFP supplements household food supplies with nutritious products such as fortified blended foods, or Ready-to-Use Supplementary foods (RUSFs).

By treating moderate malnutrition, WFP tries to prevent children from slipping into severe malnutrition. In many emergency settings, for every child suffering from severe acute malnutrition, there are eight to ten suffering from moderate malnutrition.





WFP/GMB Akash/Bangladesh

**The WFP Regional Bureau in Asia
has operations in the following countries**

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World Food Programme

January 2013