

## **IMPROVING CHILD NUTRITION –THE ACHIEVABLE IMPERATIVE FOR GLOBAL PROGRESS- UNICEF**

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UNICEF report issued on 15th April 2013 offers evidence that real progress is being made in the fight against stunted growth the hidden face of poverty for 165 million children under the age of five. The report shows that accelerated progress is both possible and necessary.

The achievable imperative for global progress confirms that a key to success against stunting is focusing attention on pregnancy and the first two years of a life. It can also mean suffering from dwarfing of development of the brain and cognitive capacity.

Stunting affects 165 million children under 5 years of age around the world, and it can trap those children in a vicious cycle of poverty and undernutrition. This report showcases new developments in nutrition programmes and analyses progress towards reducing undernutrition

The best overall indicator of children's well-being is Linear growth and provides an accurate marker of inequalities in human development. Its effect on the millions of children worldwide who not only fail to achieve their linear growth potential because of suboptimal health conditions and inadequate nutrition and care; they also suffer from the severe irreversible physical and cognitive damage that accompanies stunted growth.

Stunting is caused by several factors including poor nutrition, lack of proper care, inadequate health care and an unhealthy environment in the 1,000-day period, covering pregnancy and the

first two years of a child's life. Stunting is 100 per cent preventable. Children who suffer its consequences are among the most marginalized people on earth.

Stunting damages the very core of children – their growing brains. The harm is typically irreversible after age 2. The good news is it is entirely preventable before that point.

*Together we can prevent stunting and other forms of undernutrition, helping ensure every girl or boy has the best possible start in life.*

UNICEF's large-scale programming is focusing on stopping stunting, especially in marginalized groups by reducing and preventing malnutrition overall with cooperation with the Government.

One in four of all under-5 children globally are stunted because of chronic under nutrition in crucial periods of growth. An estimated 80 per cent of the world's stunted children live in just 14 countries.

The UNICEF report highlights successes in scaling up nutrition and improving policies, programmes and behavior change in 11 countries: Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam.

The damage done to a child's body and brain by stunting is irreversible. It drags down performance at school and future earnings. It is an injustice often passed from generation to generation that cuts away at national development. Stunted children are also at a higher risk of dying from infectious diseases than other children.

But in parts of India home to 61 million stunted children progress is still being made. In Maharashtra, the country's wealthiest state and second most populous, 39 per cent of children under two were stunted in 2005-2006. That however dropped to 23 per cent by 2012, according to a statewide nutritional survey, largely by supporting frontline workers improving child nutrition.

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