

Education and Nutrition in Ghana

Undernutrition impairs cognitive ability and reduces adult productivity, leading to decreased gross domestic product (GDP).

- Between 2011 and 2020, **955 million cedis (US\$668 million) will be lost due to decreased mental ability from iodine deficiency**. Iodine deficiency in pregnancy adversely affects the foetus and causes permanent mental disabilities. In children, iodine deficiency results in poor mental development and affects a child's school performance, ability to learn, speech, and hearing, leading to lost productivity later in life.



Photo credit: GHS/Nutrition

- **Three in 10 children under 5 years of age in Ghana are moderately or severely stunted**, which means that they will not reach the height of a healthy child of the same age.

Stunting is caused by chronic malnutrition and is permanent after 2 years of age. Stunted children are more likely to start school late, be absent more often, repeat school years, and drop out of school. It is estimated that, between 2011 and 2020, **5 billion cedis (US\$3.5 billion) of worker productivity will be lost due to stunting**.

- Pregnant women with iron deficiency anaemia tend to have low-birth-weight babies (less than 2.5 kg). **Children with low birth weight that are undernourished in infancy are at increased risk of poor mental development** and may have decreased attention span and performance in school.

Undernutrition is *preventable*, and reversing current trends will lead to a healthier and wealthier Ghana.

- During the next 10 years, investment in proven, effective nutrition interventions implemented at scale would:
 - **Prevent permanent brain damage in 500,000 children** by decreasing iodine deficiency
 - **Increase the average child's IQ by 13.5 points** by decreasing iodine deficiency
 - Result in **earlier school enrolment, children staying in school for longer, and better school performance**

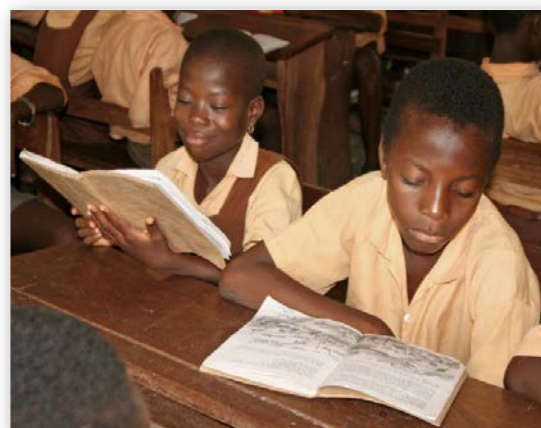


Photo credit: USAID/Ghana

- The potential productivity gains from investing in nutrition now would help Ghana fulfil its vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2020. **Economic gains from scaling up nutrition in the next 10 years include:**
 - 720 million cedis (US\$504 million) from reduction of stunting
 - 505 million cedis (US\$353 million) from reduction of iron deficiency
 - 433 million cedis (US\$303 million) from reduction of iodine deficiency

Examples of Proven, Effective Nutrition Solutions

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Promotion of optimal breastfeeding □ Promotion of appropriate complementary feeding □ Interventions to improve hygienic practices □ Vitamin A supplementation □ De-worming □ Iron-folate supplements for pregnant and lactating women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Salt iodisation □ Fortification of staple food, such as flour and oil □ Multiple micronutrient powder □ Prevention of chronic undernutrition □ Treatment of severe acute malnutrition with special foods, such as ready-to-use therapeutic food □ Interventions to improve production, availability and consumption of diversified food |
|--|--|

The nutrition and education sectors are interdependent. Improving nutrition benefits education outcomes and vice versa. The education sector can support improved nutrition in Ghana by:

- **Supporting nutrition interventions early in life** for improved school performance
- **Adopting a comprehensive school health policy** that emphasises nutrition
- **Strengthening the existing school curriculum in nutrition** and health
- **Strengthening the capacity** of teachers and administrators in nutrition
- **Committing additional resources** within the education sector to implement proven nutrition interventions in schools
- **Providing strong political leadership and commitment within the Ministry of Education and strong coordination with the Ministry of Health**

Main data sources include 2011 Ghana PROFILES and Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2008. All calculations of US\$ to cedis are based on an exchange rate of 1.43 cedis to US\$1.

For more information, contact:

Deputy Director – Nutrition
 Nutrition Department
 Ghana Health Service
 Email: nutrition@ghsmai.org
 Telephone: +233 244 212352,
 +233 302 604278, +233 302 665001

Read more from our series:

[Overview of 2011 Ghana Nutrition PROFILES Results](#)
[Fact Sheet: Health and Nutrition in Ghana](#)
[Fact Sheet: Agriculture and Nutrition in Ghana](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions on Nutrition in Ghana](#)

This brief was developed by the PROFILES task team, which comprises technical experts from the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana Statistical Services, University of Ghana, University of Development Studies, USAID, Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA), UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, and is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the Office of Health, Infectious Diseases, and Nutrition, Bureau for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and USAID/Ghana, under terms of Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-12-00005, through FANTA, managed by FHI 360.

