

Health and Nutrition in Ghana

Ghana has persistently high rates of undernutrition despite advances in economic growth and improvement in health indicators.

■ **In Ghana, 8 in 10 children under 5 years of age and 3 in 10 women suffer some**

form of undernutrition, including stunting; wasting; and deficiencies in iron, iodine, and vitamin A. In young children, undernutrition predisposes them to increased infection and impaired physical growth and mental development.

- Three in 10 children are permanently stunted.
- Seven in 10 children suffer from vitamin A deficiency.
- Eight in 10 children under 5 are anaemic.
- Seven in 10 pregnant women are anaemic.

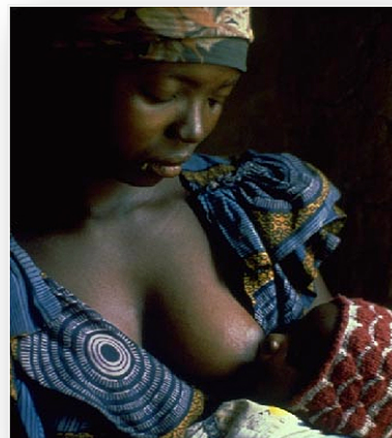


Photo credit: UNICEF

■ **Undernutrition has significant adverse consequences, including poor health and death.**

- One in 13 Ghanaian children dies before his or her fifth birthday. About half of those deaths are associated with undernutrition.
- Children that suffer from undernutrition are more likely to die of illnesses, such as malaria, diarrhoea, and pneumonia, and from complications from HIV.
- One in five maternal deaths during pregnancy and child birth is related to iron deficiency anaemia.



Photo credit: Iain McLellan, FANTA

■ **Undernutrition has long-term effects.**

- Mothers that suffer from undernutrition are likely to give birth to low-birth-weight babies, which can lead to an increased risk of inhibited growth and development.
- Female low-birth-weight babies are more likely to suffer from undernutrition when they become pregnant. This can contribute to the cycle of intergenerational malnutrition and its related problems. **But this cycle can be broken.**



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Undernutrition is *preventable*.

- Investment in proven, effective nutrition interventions implemented at scale over the next 10 years would:
 - **Save 30,000 lives** by preventing underweight
 - **Save the lives of more than 25,000 children** by decreasing vitamin A deficiency
 - **Prevent permanent brain damage in 500,000 children** by decreasing iodine deficiency
 - **Save the lives of more than 4,500 mothers** by decreasing maternal anaemia

Examples of Proven, Effective Nutrition Solutions

- 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
- 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

Urgent action is needed by the health sector to improve nutrition.

- Adopt a **comprehensive national nutrition policy**.
- **Integrate nutrition** into implementation plans at all levels of government.
- **Commit additional resources** within the health sector to scale up implementation of proven nutrition interventions **throughout the country**.
- **Improve human resource capacity for nutrition** to ensure that nutrition services can be carried out at scale.

Main data sources include 2011 Ghana PROFILES and Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2008.

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This brief was developed by the PROFILES task team, which comprises technical experts from the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Ghana, 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.



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

