

The Urgent Need to Fight Malnutrition

The great unseen problem of disease and bad nutrition is actually the kids who survive: In Africa, half the kids who survive never develop physically or mentally. –Bill Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Since 1990 the number of people living in extreme poverty has almost halved. But, we still have a long way to go in the fight against malnutrition: the number of children still affected unacceptable! Despite the strides made towards fighting extreme poverty, 2.6 million children continue to die each year from malnutrition, and an estimated of 2 billion people have protein, vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Malnutrition can be eradicated within our generation! We have the solutions to treat the deadliest forms of malnutrition, and most importantly, to prevent malnutrition from happening at all. A most common cause of malnutrition is a lack of access to nutritious food, particularly in the current context of rising food prices worldwide. 1.2 billion people around the world live below the poverty line, with less than \$1.25/day for all their basic needs such as food, water, shelter, education and health. These families have little or no ability to feed their families with foods containing the necessary nutrients to ensure they live strong, healthy lives and reach their full potential.

Hunger vs. malnutrition

Hunger and malnutrition are two different things. A very low calorie intake called acute malnutrition causes hunger pains and will lead to wasting (i.e. extreme thinness). But calorie intake differs from nutritional value, so while a child might receive enough calories to avoid the pain of hunger, the food may lack the essential nutrients a child needs. Chronic malnutrition, or hidden hunger, has little or no visible warning signs, but its effects are devastating and can lead to stunting (low height for age), a weakened immune system (making the child more susceptible to a myriad of other diseases), and poor health causing an increased in child mortality, poor productivity and mental impairment. Lifesaving solutions such as the vitamin A capsule are helping children around the world to get the essential nutrients they need, and Canada must continue our support for the great work that organizations such as the [Micronutrient Initiative](#) is doing worldwide.

Economic implications of malnutrition

Malnutrition is both the result of poverty and a cause of poverty. Therefore, it is largely affects the most vulnerable and poorest –women and children under 5 years of age suffering most. Malnutrition is a serious obstacle to economic development and empowerment, depriving individuals of the necessary vitamins and minerals to fulfill their full human and economic potential. However, malnutrition impacts not only an individual's health and potential, but also the economic health of a country, as malnutrition can negatively impact up to **6%** of a country's GDP!

Our Food System is Broken

Half of the world has too much food—which increases food waste and rising prices—and the other half has almost nothing. Here in Canada, we are fortunate, and to an extent, spoiled. The global food system will not correct itself or improve unless we raise awareness and take action. Today, due to this broken system, we have about 840 million people in the world experiencing hunger—2 billion who lack essential vitamins and minerals; 162 million children under the age of 5 who are stunted, and approximately 1.4 billion people in the world that are overweight and obese. All these people are malnourished.

Putting Malnutrition on the Map

In our day-to-day life, it is easy to forget that for those who live below the poverty line, eating is more of a luxury than a daily practice. [The Live Below the Line \(LBL\)](#) challenge is a good opportunity to connect to the nutritional reality faced by millions every day, to raise awareness to help combat malnutrition, and to connect with people in other parts of the world who struggle to put nutritious food on their tables. Your participation in the challenge will help generate the public awareness and political will to eradicate extreme poverty and fight malnutrition!

We can also put malnutrition on the map by joining millions of people around the world raising their voices for better nutrition. In the last 20 years, the global burden of acute malnutrition or wasting fell by only 11%. In fact, in some regions like sub-Saharan Africa, the number of acutely malnourished children grew, from 10 million to 13 million. We have the solutions, but we lack the public and political will. Join [Generation Nutrition](#) and learn more about the global movement to put malnutrition on the map. Let's be the generation that ends malnutrition and child mortality due to malnutrition!

TAKE ACTION

The [Live Below the Line \(LBL\) campaign](#) is a unique and powerful opportunity to engage the wider public and to educate people about the terrible effects that malnutrition has on individuals, households, and national economies. You can make a significant difference:

1. **Invite a friend to take the challenge LBL with you:** Worldwide, thousands of committed citizen advocates have taken the LBL challenge. Now, it is time to partner with a friend and take the challenge together -the more people we recruit, the more chances we have to spread our message across Canada and the world.
2. **Be part of Generation Nutrition!** You can be part of the generation that end malnutrition once and for all: sign up the Generation nutrition petition and ask as much people as you can to do the same. Sign and share the petition [here](#).
3. **Write to the newspapers to shed light of malnutrition.** Write a letter to the editor to talk about why you are taking the challenge and to inform Canadians about the devastating effects of child undernutrition.
4. **Social media action:** Share with the world why YOU support the LBL challenge and why YOU are committed to end malnutrition in our generation. Use pictures, videos and use the stats provided in this action sheet to spread the word.

Sample tweets:

I'm living #BelowTheLine this April to support @ResultsCda and raise awareness for the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty! @lblca
 Take the challenge to live #BelowTheLine for @ResultsCda & take action to fight extreme poverty with me! @lblca livebelowtheline.ca
 We can be the #generation to stop children dying of hunger @GenerationNutri Join us: <http://bit.ly/1wDuCe1>
 2 billion people suffer from #hiddenhunger. Unacceptable! Continue supporting @micronutrient

Other resources

If you want to learn more about undernutrition online, check out this interactive tool, and make sure you share it with your social media followers: <http://www.spintheplate.ca/>

See our [past nutrition actions](#)

ACTION: NUTRITION