

Global nutrition crisis threatens human development, major new report finds

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Credit: City University London

Almost every country in the world now faces a serious nutrition-related challenge, according to a new report co-authored by a City expert.

The [Global Nutrition Report 2017](#) concludes there are "significant burdens" of malnutrition in all 140 countries studied.

Professor Corinna Hawkes, the lead author of the report, said urgent action was needed to address both undernutrition and obesity.

"The world can't afford not to act on nutrition or we risk putting the brakes on human development as a whole," said Professor Hawkes, Director of the Centre for Food Policy.

"We will not achieve any of the global goals for sustainable development (SDGs) by the 2030 deadline unless there is a critical step change in our response to malnutrition in all its forms. Equally, we need action throughout the goals to tackle the many causes of malnutrition."

Key findings

In all 140 countries studied, the report found "significant burdens" of three important forms of malnutrition used as a bellwether for broader trends:

1. Childhood stunting, children too short for their age due to lack of nutrients
2. Anaemia in [women](#) of reproductive age, a serious condition that can have [long term health](#) impacts for mother and child
3. Overweight adult women, a rising concern as women are disproportionately affected by the global obesity epidemic.

The report found the vast majority (88%) of countries studied face a serious burden of two or three of these forms of malnutrition. It highlights the damaging impact this burden is having on broader global development efforts.

Its authors call for nutrition to be placed at the heart of efforts to end poverty, fight disease, raise educational standards and tackle climate change.

Obesity on the rise

The report found that overweight and obesity are on the rise in almost every country, with 2 billion of the world's 7 billion people now overweight or obese. There is currently a less than 1 per cent chance of meeting the global target of halting the rise in [obesity](#) and diabetes by 2025.

- At least 41 million children under five are overweight, with the problem affecting high and lower income countries alike
- At least 10 million children in Africa are now classified as overweight
- One third of North American men (33%) and women (34%) are obese.

Undernutrition and anaemia

Rates of undernutrition in children are decreasing, the [report](#) said, with recent gains in some countries. But global progress is not fast enough to meet internationally agreed nutrition goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 2.2 to end all forms of [malnutrition](#) by 2030.

- 155 million under-fives are stunted; Africa is the only region where absolute numbers are rising, due to population growth
- 52 million [children](#) worldwide are defined as wasted, meaning they do not weigh enough for their height.

Rising rates of anaemia in women of reproductive age are also cited as a concern with almost one in three women affected worldwide and no country on track to meet global targets.

More information: The report is available online:

www.globalnutritionreport.org/the-report

Provided by City University London

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