

PFC on Nutrition and Children – Key Messages

The challenge:

- **This is the first comprehensive, country by country report card on the state of child nutrition** – one of the most fundamental tests of global development. Its conclusions are stark – in a world of plenty we are still failing to fight a global epidemic of child undernutrition.
- **This situation is a global scandal and visible proof that the world is failing children.** Worldwide, 5.6 million child deaths every year are related to persistent undernourishment. One in four children is now underweight.
- **Undernutrition has a unique impact on children – attacking them at every stage of their life cycle.** From the underweight baby who dies in its first month of life to the schoolchild whose learning power is stunted by insufficient vitamins, nothing has greater impact on a child's ability to survive and thrive - or a nation's chances of shaking off the chains of poverty.
- **The report shows a staggering lack of progress to combat undernutrition in all but two developing regions,** putting the world far off target to meet the MDG. The proportion of underweight children in the world has been reduced by just five percentage points since 1990.
- **And yet some countries in every region have made giant leaps,** proving that progress is possible.
- **Achieving the MDG target of halving the proportion of underweight children is critical to all development hopes.** Otherwise, the world will be hard pressed to keep its promises on disease control, child mortality, maternal health, education and equality.

The solutions:

- **The real toll of undernutrition is not just hunger** – but the lack of tiny but essential nutrients that stunt development from the moment of conception.
- **The challenge is creating a world where these nutrients reach children every day.** The report urges a focus on children under two – a critical window of opportunity to “lock in” a child's potential.
- **Solutions can be simple and cheap** – providing a four cent Vitamin A supplement, or ensuring infants are exclusively breastfed.
- **But food delivery alone can never be enough.** The roots of undernutrition lie in poverty, inequality and ignorance, complicated by environmental degradation and poor governance.
- **Beating undernutrition means changing government policies and family behaviours in tandem.** Children need a nutrition “safety net” around them – including nutrition-aware parents, healthy mothers during pregnancy, and national policies protecting food security for the poorest people, even in times of crisis.
- **A common approach is critical to any progress.** No one country, or one organization, can tackle this issue alone.