

## FACT SHEET

**EMBARGOED until 00.01 GMT 15 October 2019**

# THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2019: Children, food and nutrition

**Globally, at least 1 in 3 children under five is malnourished and not growing well:**

- In South Asia, 1 in 2 children is not growing well, i.e. is either undernourished or overweight.
- In East and Southern Africa, over 2 in 5 children are not growing well. Followed by West and Central Africa at 39 per cent.
- Papua New Guinea has the highest rate of child malnutrition at 65 per cent.
- In East Asia and Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean, almost 1 in 5 children is not growing well.

**149 million children under 5 suffer from stunting, or are too short for their age:**

- In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 3 children under five is stunted.
- Around 38 per cent of children under five in India and 43 per cent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are stunted.

**Almost 50 million under 5 suffer from wasting, or are too thin for their height:**

- In South Asia, 15 per cent of children under 5 are wasted – or more than 1 in 7.
- Children suffering from severe acute malnutrition are often the face of a humanitarian emergency. But most cases occur in non-emergency settings – and mostly in Asia.
- Despite global progress, only about 1 in 4 children receives treatment for severe acute malnutrition.

**Overweight and obesity are increasing across all continents, including in Africa:**

- 40 million children under 5 years of age are overweight.
- In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, almost 1 in 7 children under 5 is overweight.
- Since 2000, the proportion of overweight children between 5 and 19 years old rose from 1 in 10 to almost 1 in 5.
- Since 1990, prevalence of overweight levels among children between 5 and 19 years of age increased by over 33 per cent in the UK, 49.7 per cent in the US.

**At least 340 million children under 5 – or 1 in 2 – suffer from deficiencies in vitamins and essential minerals:**

- 76 per cent of children living in Middle Africa, 69 per cent in Eastern Africa and 64 per cent in South-Central Asia suffer from these nutritional deficiencies.

**Children are eating poor diets early on in life:**

- Around the world, 2 in 3 children between 6 months and 2 years are not fed a diet necessary to support their rapidly growing bodies and brains.
- 44 per cent of children between 6 to 23 months old are not fed fruits or vegetables. The highest rate is in Guinea, where 85 per cent of children were not fed any fruits and

vegetables. The two countries where almost all children have fruits and vegetables are Peru at 7 per cent and Serbia at 3 per cent.

- Globally, nearly 59 per cent of children under the age of two are not fed eggs, dairy, fish or meat. In South Africa, however, consumption of these foods is higher than the global average at 76 per cent for dairy, 43 per cent for eggs and 47 per cent for meat or fish.
- Legumes, such as beans and lentils, are rich in fiber, protein, iron, copper, magnesium, manganese and zinc. Yet in South Asia, only 13 per cent of children were fed legumes, much lower than even the global average of 22 per cent. In Pakistan it was as low as nearly 8 per cent, followed by Paraguay (less than 9 per cent).
- In South Asia, only 1 in 5 children in this age group eats a diverse diet. Young children consume mostly breastmilk and grains and not enough animal source foods, fruits, legumes or vegetables.
- Over 3 in 4 children do not eat a diverse diet in West and Central Africa.

### **The poorest children are paying the highest price:**

- Only 1 in 5 children between 6 months and 2 years from the poorest households and rural areas are fed a diverse enough diet for healthy growth and brain development.
- Stunting is highest among poorest households.
- Overweight & obesity prevalence is higher among poorest households (e.g. Prevalence more than twice as high in the poorest areas of the UK).
- Animal source foods (meat and dairy) are essential for children ages 6-23 months. In high-income countries, animal source foods are only 1 to 4 times more expensive than starchy staples. In sub-Saharan Africa, they can be 9 to 10 times more expensive.

### **Globalization, urbanization, humanitarian crises and climate shocks are impacting the food children eat:**

- Globalization is shaping the food options and choices: 77 per cent of processed food sales worldwide are controlled by just 100 large firms.
- Climate shocks, loss of biodiversity, and damage to water, air and soil are worsening the nutritional prospects of millions of children and young people, especially among the poor.
- Over 19 million children spread across Bangladesh are at the frontline of climate change disasters, a quarter of them under 5 years old.
- UNICEF and its partners treated more than 3.4 million children with severe malnutrition in humanitarian settings in 2018, from Afghanistan and Yemen to South Sudan.

#####

**For photos, broil, the full report, factsheet, graphs and datasets, [click here](#).** After 00.01 GMT 15 October, you can browse the [special interactive feature](#) on our website or download [the report here](#). Explore the [data here](#).

### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

Follow UNICEF on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

### **For more information, please contact:**

Sabrina Sidhu, UNICEF New York, +1 917 4761537, [ssidhu@unicef.org](mailto:ssidhu@unicef.org)