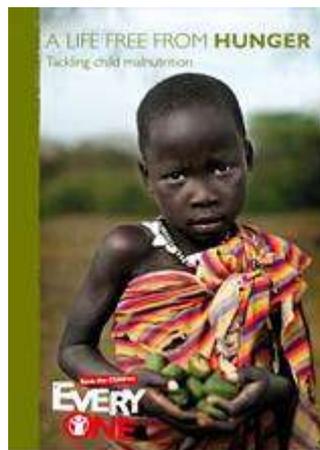


Event Report

Geneva Launch of A Life Free From Hunger - Tackling Child Malnutrition A report by Save the Children

*On behalf of The Permanent Mission of Canada, Save the Children and the
Partnership of Maternal and Newborn Child Health*



Over 50 participants gathered at the Canadian Mission in Geneva on 15 February 2012 for the launch of the Save the Children report – A life Free from Hunger: Tackling Child Malnutrition. The report, which outlines some key facts and figures around malnutrition calls on all interested parties to promote 6 key actions to improve nutrition: 1. Making malnutrition visible, 2. Investing in the 13 direct interventions outlined by the Lancet, 3. Filling the health worker gap of 3.5 million health workers outlined in the Global Strategy, 4. Protecting families from poverty which is one underlying cause of malnutrition, 5. Harnessing agriculture to help tackle malnutrition and 6. Galvanizing political leadership through events such as the G8/G20 processes.

Malnutrition is the underlying cause of over one third of the annual 7.6 million child deaths and 10% of maternal deaths. Dr. Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director General of the WHO notes that “poor access to nutrition promotes anaemia in women and children, stunting, underweight prevalence as well as low birth weight, all of which have direct impact on survival, cognitive function and productivity.” Carole Presern, Director of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health reminded the participants that “according to Article 24 of the Declaration on Human Rights, the right to food is a fundamental right”. H.E. Juan Jose Gomez de Gamacho, Ambassador of Mexico noted that as such “tackling nutrition is not only a question of human rights, but a question of sustainable economic development.” H.E. Elissa Golberg, Ambassador of Canada echoes this point by noting that “adequate nutrition is intimately linked with broader efforts for more productive societies”.

Despite these alarming figures and a growing recognition of the importance of nutrition to social and economic development, progress remains slow. Patrick Watt, Global Campaigns Director at Save the

Children notes that despite the enormity of the problem ‘Global progress on stunting has been extremely slow. The proportion of children who are stunted has fallen on average by just half a percent per year’.

Participants expressed during the meeting strong commitment to reducing malnutrition. The G8/G20 processes were highlighted as opportunities for rallying political support, with possible revisions of l’Aquila to incorporate stronger linkages between agriculture, food security and nutrition. They also noted the importance of sharing the findings of the report with private sector companies involved in food production. Regina Moench-Pfanner, Senior Director of Innovation and Technical Services at GAIN, noted the importance of providing incentives to private companies to provide fortified foods. Participants also raised the importance of linking discussions around the production of food with discussions around tobacco where farmers asked to stop the production of tobacco will need advice on alternate crops.

The event recognized the need for concerted and accelerated action on nutrition and pointed to the importance of accountability for progress. The Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health promotes the tracking of exclusive breastfeeding and stunting, which are key nutrition indicators. The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is also working on a 2012 report which will highlight progress on commitments made to the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, a number of which are nutrition specific.

Interesting quotes:

Juan Jose Gomez Gamacho, Ambassador Mexico:

“I have been participating over the last few months in discussions around the financial crisis, the IMF, Greece etc., these debates always miss one thing, and this piece has to do with people, what they are suffering as a result of this crisis. The social aspect of this crisis is crucial. In Mexico we do not think that meaningful development can be achieved without higher living standards for its populations...including in housing, work, nutrition etc.”

“From pre/colonial times to 1910 life expectancy in Mexico was 30 years . Life expectancy is now is 75 years. This speaks to the fact that a country that wants to grow needs to invest in human development.”

“Well targeted public social programs can have meaningful impact on health. In a country like Mexico, our real challenge is from a population of 113 million people is 150 000 {children with severe malnutrition}, this is the result of well-targeted steady social programs.”

“When we talk about health malnutrition, one has to understand that this is not a moral obligation or the ethical thing to do. This is the case but it is obvious. It is about economics, there is no way a country can progress without a healthy society. “

“We are targeting malnutrition issues through two types of policies. Health policies: This year we announced that we were reaching universal health coverage. There is no Mexican that does not have access to the health system. Within this program there is a chapter whereby all kids that were born from 1st Jan 2006 have access to a social health security program and therefore have access to health care for life. There are also social programs that specially target the poor and women prior to, during and after pregnancy that provide incentives for them to visit doctors. Access to doctors is not only a

question of making the doctor available. One has to have a different set of incentives to actually want to go see the doctor...Food policies: For instance we have one state run company that provides millions of litres of milk that target six million poor in Mexico. We have another set of economic incentives for poor families and for families with little babies to make sure they get the necessary supplements”

Patrick Watt, Director Global Campaigns, Save the Children:

“Why are we campaigning on this issue now? At Save [the Children] we work towards ensuring that kids survive and reach their full potential... in order to do this you need to invest in key essential interventions but you also need to look at why children are not surviving...One third of child deaths as many as 2.6 million are due to malnutrition. Chronic malnutrition until the age of 2 also has lifetime repercussions in terms of height, weight and cognitive functions”

“[Malnutrition] is an issue that has to be tackled because of impact on economic development “

“Why now? We are four years away from Millenium Development Goals. We need a concerted effort to reach MDG 4. This will require intensified efforts. At the moment we are seeing a rate of reduction that is very slow. The challenge is clear, if the population growth continues at its present rate and nothing is done to improve nutrition, half a billion children that will have experienced malnutrition by 2020. The challenge is large and the challenge is urgent.”

“Rising food prices, resulting from economic and financial volatility impact the ability of families to have access to nutritious food”

Flavia Bustreo: Assistant Director General, Family, Women’s and Children’s Health

“Poor nutrition affects people in a challenging and permanent way”

“Low birth weight results in a higher rick of illness earlier in life but studies are also showing that a higher rate of illness later in life”

“The economic argument is clear, anaemia, stunting, underweight prevalence and low birth weight all impact productivity and therefore economic development”

“Countries are facing a dual burden, with under nutrition and over nutrition posing health problems”

Regina Moech-Pfanner, Senior Director Innovation and Technical Services, GAIN

“The World Bank estimate that reaching 90% of stunted children with cost-effective interventions identified by the Lancet in2008 would require an annual investment of between 10 and 12 billion US dollars”

“Obviously we cannot just rely on the public sector to make it happen. We need to cut across sectors and bring diverse actors together ...including... private sector partners.”

“We believe that companies can be motivated to produce high quality nutritious food products because such products will also perform well on the market”