World Leaders Convene to Address Global Crisis of Child Malnutrition

G-8 leaders urged to end child malnutrition in order to stimulate long-term economic development and greater progress against hunger and poverty

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In advance of the G-8 Summit at Camp David this weekend, U.S and world leaders met on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. today to assess efforts to combat child malnutrition—a condition which results in three million preventable child deaths annually and drains billions of dollars in lost productivity and health care costs from poor countries. Participants at the “Scaling Up Nutrition: Calling All Champions” briefing called upon G-8 leaders to prioritize action on child malnutrition as part of their development and food security discussions at the G-8 Summit.


Nearly 200 million children worldwide are chronically malnourished, resulting in huge losses not only in human potential but also economic productivity in some of the world’s poorest countries. “G-8 leaders have the opportunity to change the lives of millions of children by making a bold commitment to tackle malnutrition. Wiping out chronic malnutrition is the best first step toward helping developing countries’ economies,” said Carolyn Miles, President and CEO of Save the Children. “We know that malnutrition can lead to anywhere between a two to three percent loss in GDP” [gross domestic product].

President Obama, along with G-8 and African leaders, is expected to announce on Friday new efforts to advance global agricultural development aimed at addressing hunger and poverty in Africa.

Several speakers noted today, however, that action and investment targeted specifically at improving nutrition for women and children during the critical 1,000 day window between pregnancy and age two would promote even greater long-term progress on hunger and poverty alleviation.

“Good nutrition during the critical 1,000 day window from pregnancy to a child’s second birthday is crucial to developing a child’s cognitive capacity and physical growth. Ensuring a child receives adequate nutrition during this window can yield dividends for a lifetime, as a well-nourished child will perform better in school, more effectively fight off disease and even earn more as an adult,” said Dr. Rajiv Shah, Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
“People are beginning to realize that agriculture is not just about growing more food. It is about growing more nutritious foods and making sure they are available and accessible to all, particularly women and children during the first 1,000 days. This is a welcome, and long overdue, change – and one that we must all act on as quickly as possible,” said Kathy Spahn, President and CEO of Helen Keller International.

Several speakers noted that earlier this week an expert panel of Nobel laureate economists known as the Copenhagen Consensus found that fighting malnutrition in young children is the number one investment that policymakers can make in order to improve global health and development. The research indicated that for every $1 invested in nutrition, as much as $138 in better health and increased productivity is generated.

“This research is especially timely in our budget-constrained environment. It is essential that the global community rally to mobilize not only more money for nutrition, but also more nutrition for the money already spent on hunger and poverty alleviation,” said Adam Taylor, Vice President, Advocacy at World Vision.

Many at the event called on the G-8 to commit to a concrete goal to reduce chronic malnutrition and that investments in food security, agriculture and health are specifically targeted to improve nutrition for women and children.

“Nutrition must be integrated into all of our food security efforts — from emergency food assistance and school meals programs, to the food grown by local farmers,” said Richard Leach, President and CEO of World Food Program USA. “This is an unprecedented moment in the fight against hunger where there is commitment among all sectors — public and private — to address the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations.”

“We know that investments in nutrition – particularly within the 1,000 day window between pregnancy and a child’s second birthday – are the most cost-effective development interventions available, bar none. The key is to generate the political will and commitment to make those investments both now and into the future,” said Ambassador Tony Hall, Executive Director of The Alliance to End Hunger.

The briefing also highlighted commitments from the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, an effort led by 27 developing countries to accelerate progress against malnutrition, in coordination with G-8 governments, donors and UN agencies.

“The United States has long played a vital role in mustering political will and resources to bolster global prosperity,” said Bread for the World President Rev. David Beckmann. “U.S. leadership can support the efforts of developing countries to focus on achieving greater self-reliance, productivity, and food security, and a reduction in chronic hunger and malnutrition – especially during the critical 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child’s second birthday.”

Event conveners included 1,000 Days, The Alliance to End Hunger, Bread for the World, CARE, ChildFund International, Concern Worldwide, Global Alliance for Improved
Nutrition, Helen Keller International, Save the Children, World Food Program USA and World Vision.

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1,000 Days

1,000 Days champions action and investment to improve nutrition during the critical 1,000 days during a woman’s pregnancy and her child’s 2nd birthday, when better nutrition can have a lifelong impact on a child’s future and help break the cycle of poverty. The 1,000 Days Partnership, launched by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, represents more than 80 organizations committed to improving maternal and child nutrition and supports the global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement which coordinates and accelerates international efforts to combat undernutrition.

The Alliance to End Hunger

The Alliance to End Hunger is a coalition of more than 100 organizations – corporations; non-profit groups; universities; individuals; and Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious groups – working to build the public and political will to end hunger in the U.S. and around the world. The Alliance works to broker unique partnerships between our members that leverage their efforts to benefit the hungry people they serve; to elevate hunger on the national and international agenda by advocating to and educating elected officials and other policymakers; and to make global connections among groups working to end hunger worldwide.

Bread for the World

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging U.S. decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. By changing policies, programs, and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, we provide help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live. Bread for the World Institute provides policy analysis on hunger and strategies to end it. The Institute educates opinion leaders, policy makers, and the public about hunger in the United States and abroad.

CARE

Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year CARE worked in 87 countries and reached 82 million people around the world.

ChildFund International

ChildFund International works in 31 countries globally to help children reach their full potential—which depends on a healthy start to life. To ensure that infants and young children have a chance to thrive, ChildFund works holistically to improve nutrition in conjunction with maternal and child health, parent-child interaction, education and child protection in a variety of contexts and cultures.

Concern Worldwide

Concern Worldwide is an international, non-governmental humanitarian organization dedicated to reducing extreme poverty, with more than 3,200 personnel working in 25 of the poorest countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Concern targets the root causes of extreme poverty through emergency and long-term development programs in health, education, livelihoods and microfinance, HIV and AIDS, and emergency response, directly reaching more than 9.5 million people. A global leader in food and nutrition security, Concern has worked for 44 years on the
front-lines of the world’s worst food and nutrition crises, and is prioritizing the delivery of integrated programs targeting the direct and indirect causes of hunger and undernutrition.

**Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)**
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is driven by a vision of a world without malnutrition. GAIN supports public-private partnerships to increase access to the essentials nutrients that help make people, communities and economies stronger and healthier. With a current reach of more than 610 million people in more than 30 countries, GAIN’s goal is to improve the lives of 1.5 billion people within the most vulnerable populations around the world through access to sustainable nutrition solutions.

**Helen Keller International**
Helen Keller International’s (HKI) mission is to save the sight and lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. HKI combats the causes and consequences of blindness and malnutrition by establishing programs based on evidence and research in vision, health and nutrition. The organization is known for sustainability, reliability, efficiency, and the highest level of technical expertise in preventing blindness and reducing malnutrition.

**Save the Children**
Save the Children is the leading independent organization for children with programs in more than 120 countries. Our mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

**World Food Program USA**
World Food Program USA is a nonprofit organization that builds support in the United States to end global hunger. WFP USA engages individuals and organizations, shapes public policy and generates resources for the United Nations World Food Program and other hunger relief operations.

**World Vision**
Nutrition is a global priority for World Vision, a Christian relief and development agency working in 98 countries. The 1,000 day window for nutrition is currently the central focus of the World Vision International Child Health Now advocacy campaign and the theme of “The Best Start,” a report launched during the UN General Assembly’s opening week in September 2011. World Vision invites you to visit its HungerFree campaign exhibit at Union Station, which will be displayed in the West Porch daily from May 17 through May 19, 2012.

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