

Malnutrition: Silent emergency of India

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Malnutrition is India's silent emergency and among India's greatest human development challenges. Although India has seen strong economic growth over the past 20 years, malnutrition in children under five years of age continues to be among the highest in the world. Rates of malnutrition among India's children are almost five times more than in China, and twice those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly half of all India's children, approximately 60 million, are underweight, about 45% are stunted (too short for their age), 20% are wasted (too thin for their height, indicating acute malnutrition), 75% are anemic, and 57% are vitamin A deficient. Malnutrition affects children's chances of survival, increases their susceptibility to illness, reduces their ability to learn, increases their chances of dropping out early from school, and makes them less productive in later life. Much of this undernourishment happens during pregnancy and in the first two years of a child's life and, without appropriate interventions, the damage to brain development and future economic productivity is largely irreversible. Can we stop this silent emergency of India?

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