

Sapat na Pagtugon sa Usaping Nutrisyon: Scaling-up budget spending to combat the triple burden of malnutrition



The most recent Expanded National Nutrition Survey ¹ indicates that stunting has declined from 33.4% ² in 2015 to 28.8% in 2019. There's also been a remarkable decrease in child wasting from 8.1% in 2013 to 5.8% in 2019. Concrete health and nutrition interventions should aim to address the increasing triple burden of malnutrition ³ among children under-five years, with 2.9% who are estimated to be overweight (2.9 %).

Another milestone that is worth mentioning is the conspicuous slump in cases of anemia among children 6-59 months old from 32.5% in 2003 to 12.5% in 2019.

These positive developments can be attributed to continuous health interventions, initiatives, and relentless advocacy by various stakeholders and actors. However, these striking fulfillments will become insignificant if measures and programs to seriously address malnutrition are not sustained and supported.

Undoubtedly, the impact of malnutrition, especially stunting, is wide and far-reaching.

Health and nutrition interventions are specifically significant in light of recent data released by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) indicating that hunger incidence ⁴, the highest recorded since 2014, increased during the last 3 months, with 7.6 million Filipinos experiencing involuntary hunger.

Given these situation, it is imperative to reiterate the continuous and adequate funding for essential health and nutrition services that would particularly focus on the first 1000 days of the life of a child, as well as give particular importance to program interventions that will ensure immunizations, unimpeded access of children and pregnant mothers to health check-ups and essential health services.

If malnutrition is not addressed, an interminable threat to the health and well-being of Filipino children looms. Studies show that undernutrition is one of the major causes of brain underdevelopment which affects the mental and physical capacity of children, and cause mental impairment, and the body's inability to fight infections and other illnesses and diseases. ⁵

1 <https://fnri.dost.gov.ph/index.php/programs-and-projects/news-and-announcement/763-2018-expanded-national-nutrition-survey>

2 Philippine Statistics Authority

3 https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_faces-of-malnutrition.html

4 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1310045/1-of-5-pinoys-hungry-as-sws-records-highest-hunger-rate-since-2014>

5 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/za/blog/incompetence/202008/malnutrition-and-infant-brain-development>

As Congress deliberates on the 2021 budget, below are our concrete asks to address issues of malnutrition in the country:

① Ensure sufficient funding for the implementation of the Kalusugan at Nutriti ng Mag-Nanay Act or RA 11148.

Make sure that continued subsidy to fundamental and proof-based nutrition interventions recognized as program components in the IRR of RA 11148 are sustained. The return on investment for nourishment interventions is favorable as the economic cost of malnutrition is high and interventions are effective and affordable.

Increased investments on maternal nutrition must also be supported. This is important to ensure that the goal of ensuring that nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions for both mother and child are achieved.

② Invest in essential nutrition commodities and national and sub-national procurement, supply, and distribution systems.

Guarantee that basic sustenance supplies that forestall and treat different types of malnutrition continue to be acquired. Strengthening of supply chain management, timely acquisition, dissemination and tracking of satisfactory nourishment supplies down to the barangay level, particularly during crises, must be ensured.

③ Fund additional staff positions in the DOH Family Health Office to support the Nutrition Program Manager.

A sufficient number of specialized and administrative staff at the Family Health Office is critical to guaranteeing that the important elements of planning, procurement, strategy improvement, evidence-generation, and monitoring and assessment are completed on schedule and with quality.



Filipino children under 5 years are not growing well

3,300,000
are stunted

672,000
are wasted

336,000
are overweight

Most of the issues leading to the triple burden of malnutrition happen in the first 1,000 days of life from conception to a child's second birthday

The right to adequate nutrition and health is a fundamental, foundational right for children.

Source: UNICEF Technical Budget Notes on Nutrition