

INTRODUCTION

Zambia continues to face the challenge of long term under-nutrition among children five years of age and below, resulting in stunting.

A child is expected to grow to a minimum height of 80 cm by the age of two years. Less than 80 cm by this age, a child is said to be stunted - due to poor nutrition.

Naturally, human beings vary in height according to their genetic make-up. However, when a large number of a population is too short (or too tall) it is cause for concern. In Zambia, 4 out of ten children under the age of five are not naturally short but due to poor nutrition they have experienced stunted growth.

For a child, the foundation for a healthy and productive life is established in the first 1,000 days of life—the period from conception to the age of 2 years.

Nutrition in the first 1000 days of life

The problem of stunting starts with poor

nutrition of women before, during and after pregnancy and is particularly noticeable during the child's first two years.

The first 1000 days is a period of rapid formation and growth of all the vital organs; the brain is especially active and much of it is fully developed by the end of the first 1000 days of life.

For these processes to occur correctly critical nutritional needs are required. This is why Zambia now refers to this period as the 1st 1000 Most Critical Days.

Losses in a child's development during the first 1000 Most Critical Days of life can never be fully regained. A child deprived of good nutrition over a long period of time is at higher risk of increased childhood diseases, death or reduced cognitive functions later in life affecting school performance, productivity in adulthood, as well as adult chronic diseases like obesity, cancer, heart and liver problems.

Child stunting can happen to any child who does not receive adequate nutrition

and care, including children in your church. As a church leader your members look up to you for guidance on spiritual matters as well as social and familial matters.

Mark 8: 1-38: In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to Him and said to them I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar ... and He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before them..."(NKJV)

Arise to be a nutrition champion in your church. A child is a gift from God and you have the ability to make the 1st 1000 MCDs the best start to life.

KEY ACTIONS

As a church leader you can;

1. Refer to biblical scriptures to help your church members understand the importance of good nutrition.
2. Use different church gatherings such as home cells, bible studies, sermons and women groups to discuss nutrition in the First 1000 Most Critical Days.
3. Involve men in the promotion of good nutrition for their families and communities by taking the lead to ensure women and children have optimal nutrition.
4. Network with the nutrition sector to understand the nutrition situation in the country.
5. Encourage other church leaders to participate in the promotion of optimal nutrition in the first 1000 most critical days.
6. Encourage families to seek medical attention before and during pregnancy and when the child is sick, and take their children for regular growth monitoring, and other health services.
7. Encourage pregnant women to take their iron supplements and eat a variety of foods
8. Promote the use of safe water, proper hygiene and sanitation by encouraging your members to chlorinate or boil drinking



Republic of Zambia

Church Leaders Arise to stop Child Stunting

For more information Contact

For further information contact
National Food and Nutrition Commission,
P.O. BOX 32699 Lusaka.
Tel: 227803/221098, Fax: 221426,
www.nfnc.org.zm

Printed with financial support from UNICEF

