

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 it is a cause for concern. In Zambia, 4 out of ten children under the age of five have stunted growth.

The foundation for a child's health and productive life is established in the first 1000 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 of life.

During this period the child's vital organs grow rapidly; 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 First 1000 Most Critical Days**.

Losses due to nutrition 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 illnesses, death or reduced cognitive functions later in life, affecting school performance and productivity in adulthood. Such children are prone to chronic diseases like obesity, cancer, heart and liver problems in adult life.

This means that a lot more needs to be done to improve the nutrition of our children. Zambia cannot afford to look back at another 10 years of lost productivity and national wealth due to stunting.

As a parliamentarian, you have the ability to advocate for improvements in nutrition

investments in order to scale up nutrition interventions. As parliamentarians you have strategic position to be the voice that speaks for the right to good nutrition for all mothers and children in Zambia.

KEY ACTIONS

As a parliamentarian you can;

1. Lobby the government to review and harmonize policies and legislation that promote nutrition in Zambia.
2. Advocate and push for the right to optimal nutrition to be enshrined among the social and economic rights in part 3 of the Zambian constitution
3. Lobby the government to increase budgetary allocation to the nutrition sector and track government funding towards nutritional programmes.
4. Move motions and raise points of order to urge government to look into the nutrition situation in Zambia.
5. Engage in consultative meetings with

the government and relevant stakeholders to address the nutritional challenges in the country.

6. Engage and involve the private sector as partners in nutritional programmes through their social corporate responsibility.
7. Include nutritional programmes in your constituency development funds such as those that help improve hygiene, water and sanitation and household food security.
8. Work closely with the communities you represent and local media to disseminate nutritional information.
9. Influence the general public to demand for optimal nutrition interventions.
10. Involve men to champion nutrition interventions to promote good nutrition for their families.

Together, we can fight child stunting in Zambia.



Republic of Zambia

PARLIAMENTARIANS

Arise to stop Child Stunting

For more information Contact

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