

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 Most Critical 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.

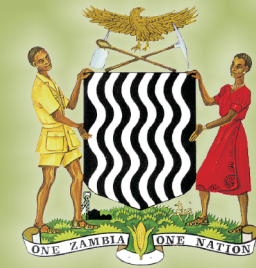
Losses in a child's development during the first 1000 Most Critical Days of life can never be fully regained. A child deprived of good nutrition over a long period of time is at higher risk of increased childhood diseases, death or reduced cognitive functions later in life affecting school performance,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

Your role as a traditional leader

As a traditional leader you command a lot of authority and respect in your community because you are their leader, advisor, and protector. Therefore, your role in promoting practices that enhance the nutritional status of women and children throughout the period of the first 1000 MCDs is extremely important.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Encourage families to grow and eat different locally available food crops as well as small livestock such as chickens, goats and rabbits.
2. Encourage families to have their own food reserves. You may also ensure that there are communal food banks to assist the vulnerable in the community and in times of emergencies.
3. Involve men in the promotion of good nutrition for their families and communities by taking the lead to provide and ensure that women and children eat different kinds of foods every day and access health services.
4. Ensure that your subjects have access to farming inputs, for example varied seeds, fertilizers and extension services like trainings on crop and livestock management.
5. Encourage your subjects to visit health care facilities for programs like antenatal, growth monitoring and promotion (GMP), vitamin A supplementation, de-worming, management of malnutrition, family planning and immunization.
6. Encourage men to involve women in decision making on what should be grown, consumed and sold.
7. Facilitate equal ownership of land to promote farming activities such as gardening, rearing of livestock and aquaculture.
8. During various community meetings with your subjects discuss nutrition issues and concerns in your community.
9. Engage in consultative meetings with the government and other stake holders to address nutrition challenges.
10. Work closely with the local community radio stations to disseminate nutrition information.



Republic of Zambia

Traditional Leaders

Arise to stop Child Stunting

For more information Contact

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