




# NUTRITION



Good nutrition is invaluable. Children (and adults) who are well fed have more opportunities. In general, they are healthier, more productive and study better. Everyone benefits from improved nutrition: the children, their families, their communities and even their countries.

A photograph of a woman with a patterned headwrap and a light blue shirt, smiling as she breastfeeds her young child. The child is wearing a purple shirt and yellow shorts. They are sitting on a patterned cloth against a green wall. A blue text box is overlaid on the image.

A WOMAN BREASTFEEDS  
HER SON IN OLD MEIMA,  
A VILLAGE IN THE EAST  
OF SIERRA LEONE.

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**Malnutrition is at the base of more than one third of child deaths in developing countries**, and is sometimes described as a silent emergency, because its effects often remain invisible for a long time.

Contrary to what many people think, famine or war are often only partially the reason why children die of malnutrition. When children do not get the nutrients they need to develop fully, **it affects their physical growth, their cognitive development and thus their future.**

Malnourished children from poor families often do not finish school, and are left with little chance of escaping poverty. This cycle can perpetuate itself for generations. **Malnutrition must consequently be tackled at all costs**, to break the poverty cycle.

Today, one child in four under the age of five suffers from malnutrition: that's **143 million children**. Micronutrient (iodine, iron, vitamins, ...) deficiency remains a public health issue in many countries.

## What does UNICEF do?

UNICEF carries out **nutrition programmes** that ensure respect for every child's right to adequate nutrition.

Promoting a **varied and nutritious diet** and raising awareness on the advantages of **continued breastfeeding** are measures that really make a difference.

Detecting acute and chronic malnutrition is the first step. Then, it's a matter of timely treatment with **micronutrients and therapeutic food**. With this treatment, UNICEF saves millions of children's lives every year.