

# PROFILING UNDERNUTRITION: PAPUA NEW GUINEA



## FAST FACTS ON GOOD NUTRITION

➤ In 2013, more than six million children died around the world before their fifth birthday.

➤ **Undernutrition is responsible for an astonishing 45% of these deaths**, representing 3 million deaths each year.



➤ Yet we know how to **end preventable child deaths** and the damage caused by undernutrition.

➤ The first 1,000 days of life – from conception to your second birthday – are the most important for growing a healthy body and brain.

➤ Giving children the right nutrition early in life helps them perform better at school, grow into healthy adults, earn more at work and provide their own children a healthy start to life.

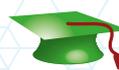
➤ **INVESTING** in improved nutrition during the first critical 1,000 days of life can:



+ **Directly save more than 1 million lives each year;**



+ **Boost a country's GDP by at least 2-3% annually;**



+ **Build self-sufficiency: well-nourished children are more likely to continue their education, have higher IQs, and earn up to 46% more over their lifetimes; and**



+ **Help end hunger and break the cycle of poverty: well-nourished children are 33% more likely to escape poverty as adults.**

➤ Investing in nutrition delivers the biggest bang for our aid buck.

**\$1 → \$138**

**For every dollar spent, up to \$138 worth of benefits are gained in better health and increased productivity.**

Despite all this evidence, **ONLY 0.4% OF ALL AID** from donor countries goes to nutrition-related projects, and most donors (including Australia) do not prioritise nutrition.

# UNDERNUTRITION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

## Did you know?

- + In 2012 more than 13,000 children under 5 died in Papua New Guinea, and rates of undernutrition are extremely high
- + **Half (49.5%) of all children in PNG have had their growth permanently stunted by undernutrition**
- + Around 14% are underweight for their height (or wasted) because they do not have enough food
- + Nutrient deficiencies are very common
- + Significant regional and income inequalities remain
- + **PNG is not on track** to meet either the hunger or child health Millennium Development Goals

## IN 2012 AROUND 13,000 CHILDREN UNDER 5 DIED IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG)

### Half (49.5%) of all children under five in PNG are too short for their age, or stunted

This means they have suffered **long-term insufficient nutrient intake** and frequent infections, stunting their growth. Stunting generally occurs before age two, and effects (including delayed motor development, impaired cognitive function and poor school performance) are largely irreversible.

### Around 14% weigh less than they should considering their height (known as wasted)

Wasting is usually the result of significant food shortage, or a serious disease. A child with wasting is nine times more likely to die than a well-nourished child.

### Nutrient deficiencies are very common

A lack of vitamin A, iron, zinc, and other nutrients during early childhood puts children at higher risk of: experiencing chronic disease; delayed cognitive development; delayed enrolment in school; and reductions in academic achievement and future earnings. Nutrient deficiencies in PNG are very common. **37% of children in PNG are vitamin A deficient**, which makes them more susceptible to diarrhoea, measles and respiratory infections. **Nearly half of women and children under five in PNG are anaemic** (iron deficient).

### Significant regional and income inequalities remain

Despite high economic growth in recent years, **PNG's health and social indicators are among the worst in the Asia Pacific**. Challenges in governance and geography make infrastructure development extremely difficult, and income from the development of the natural resources sector is not generally directed towards social services.

PNG's terrain proves a momentous challenge for infrastructure development. 85% of the population live in remote highland areas and far flung islands, and only 7% of the population have access to the electrical grid.

Poverty is the norm in PNG: **85% of PNG's population is poor**. Income is highly unequal. The top 20% of the population earned 56% of the country's wealth and the bottom 20% of the population earned only 4%. Food security is also a significant issue, as over two-thirds of the population make their living in the informal economy, mostly through subsistence farming.

### PNG is not on track to meet the hunger Millennium Development Goal

**PNG will not meet** any Millennium Development Goals, including any goals relevant to nutrition (such as reducing extreme poverty or reducing child mortality).

Population	7.3 Million
Gross National Income (GNI) per person	US\$2,740
Average annual GDP growth rate, 2004 to 2013 inclusive	5.8%
Life Expectancy at birth	62 years
Babies born with low birthweight	11%
Population with access to clean water	40%
Population using sanitation facilities	18.7%
Stunting in children under 5	49.5%
Wasting in children under 5	14%
Human Development Index Ranking	156
People living on less than US\$2 per day	28%

## WHAT ACTION IS NEEDED?

There are 10 simple nutrition interventions proven to have a significant impact on maternal and child health if provided to everyone. About one fifth of the existing burden of stunting can be completely averted if we use the following approaches:

1. Use iodised salt in food
2. Provide pregnant women with micronutrient supplements including iron and folate
3. Provide pregnant women with calcium supplements
4. Ensure pregnant women have additional nutritional intake especially balanced in protein
5. Provide children with vitamin A supplements
6. Provide children with zinc supplements
7. Promote breastfeeding
8. Provide education for mothers on good food and nutrition practices for children weaning from breast milk to family foods
9. Provide weaning children with food supplements with extra nutrients
10. Improve clinical management of severe undernutrition