



Malnutrition and other health concerns are serious global challenges.

Nutrition is a major, changeable and powerful factor in promoting health, preventing and treating disease and improving quality of life. Malnourished people, especially children, are more susceptible to disease. Children who are malnourished suffer irreparable damage both physically and mentally. Even if food is available, it may be too costly for people living in some countries. For instance, in Afghanistan, the price of flour skyrocketed in 2008 because of drought. Even though prices dropped in 2009, a bag of flour still cost about \$21, a sack of rice was \$25 and a container of oil cost \$20. Considering that over ten million Afghans live on less than \$1 a day, the high cost of food still prevents many people

from being able to afford it.

Nepal has one of South Asia's worst malnutrition rates, with almost half of children under five stunted in their growth and suffering from chronic malnutrition. The cost of food is a major concern. The country is highly dependent upon imported food, and rapidly rising global food prices and increased transportation costs are driving the price of food higher and higher. The cost of the main staple food, rice, increased by 24%, cooking oil by 30% and flour by 18% in 2008. As prices rise, many people are forced to skip meals and eat less nutritious food.

Health is affected by other factors as well as nutrition. In many countries medical care is

unavailable or financially out of reach of most people. As a result, many people die and diseases spread. Lack of clean water and sanitation is a major factor in the spread of disease. For instance, in the spring of 2009, an outbreak of cholera spread among people along the Kenyan-Ethiopian border. Left untreated, cholera can lead to severe dehydration and death. The spread was attributed to poor sanitation and water shortages, which led to the consumption of contaminated water. Population movement along the common border fuelled the spread of the disease. Malnutrition and lack of medical care made the situation worse.

Improving the delivery of health services and dealing with malnutrition are key factors in improving the health of people in developing nations. Nowhere is this truer than in Africa, which carries one quarter of the world's health burden. For this reason, Canada is providing, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA),

approximately \$450 million from 2006 to 2016 for the Africa Health Systems Initiative.

Throughout the developing world, CIDA works in partnership with others to help reduce death and disability from diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. During the recent avian influenza threat, organizations like CIDA worked systematically with governments around the world to develop a global response to a possible pandemic.

CIDA's program to fight malnutrition demonstrates the effective use of limited resources for high-impact results. Small amounts of key vitamins and minerals can avert disabilities and deaths, help young bodies to grow and support children's cognitive and social development. For instance, blindness has been prevented in an untold number of children who have been provided with two doses of vitamin A each year.



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