



Department
for International
Development



Press release

12 August 2012

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1800 12/8/2012

Global Hunger Event: Lasting legacy for children around the world

Millions of children in the world's poorest countries must benefit from the legacy of the London Olympics, the Prime Minister said today as he and the Brazilian Vice President, Michel Temer were joined by double Olympic gold medal winner Mo Farah to urge a global drive to boost nutrition.

The two leaders hosted a high-level meeting bringing together representatives from international governments, charities and businesses at Downing Street on the day of the closing ceremony of the London Olympics. They urged the world to take decisive action before the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio to transform the life chances of millions of children by improving their nutrition.

They were joined at Downing Street by sporting legends Pele and Haile Gebrselassie who have also campaigned to end the cycle of hunger and poverty by tackling their root causes.

Scientific innovation, better accountability by governments and greater co-operation between governments, civil society and business can all help tackle undernutrition, prevent stunting and improve children's life chances. Three new initiatives were announced on these areas today:

- On **science and innovation**, the UK government committed to support the CGIAR to create drought resistant and vitamin enriched crops which could help feed 45 million people for a year in Asia and Africa. Alongside Canada, Ireland, the US and Gates Foundation, the UK will invest in HarvestPlus to roll out nutrition rich seeds and tubers to benefit 3 million people in Africa and India;
- On **private sector** liaison, some leading UK companies like Unilever, Syngenta and GSK will work to find ways to make nutritious food available to poor families at prices they can afford; and
- On **accountability**, the UK government will work with partners like Ireland and Switzerland to support new schemes to improve government accountability across developing countries, and to pilot text messaging as a way to provide early warnings of areas where nutrition supplies are needed.

Long term exposure to a poor and inadequate diet and repeated infections have left 170 million children in the world suffering from stunting - a condition which stops children from fulfilling their potential because their bodies do not grow and develop properly. The UN's World Health Assembly recently agreed a new global target of a 40 per cent reduction in the number of stunted children by 2025.

Speaking after the meeting, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell said:

“As we focus on the legacy of these wonderful London Olympics, we have a chance to give millions of the world's poorest children a better start to life. We know that better nutrition for mothers and infants in the first 1,000 days from the start of pregnancy can stop the irreversible effects of malnutrition.

“Government, businesses and NGOs must now work in partnership to improve nutrition for the world's poorest people. I am determined that the UK will help lead and galvanise global efforts to tackle malnutrition. That would be a great Olympic legacy from London 2012.”

Vice-President Michel Temer said:

“In the past, there was an almost complete lack of concern for the hunger which poor people all over the world were subjected to. Little by little we came to realize the harm that hunger causes, restricting human development. It is with this new perspective in mind that countries have come together in London in this commendable initiative to search for ways to fight hunger.”

Recent decisions made by others participating in today's event which will make an impact on global levels of undernutrition include:

- A doubling of India's budget to improve the health and nutrition of 100 million women and children;
- A major European Union commitment to take responsibility for reducing the number of stunted children in the world by 7 million by 2025;
- A World Food Programme agreement to use its Purchase for Progress Programme, to help 1,700 farmers in Rwanda to grow iron rich beans to be used in emergency food relief.
- A multi-million pound annual investment by Children's Investment Fund Foundation to reduce stunting and malnutrition.

The meeting also highlighted the work of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in tackling high levels of stunting. SUN, supported by UN, donors, civil society and the private sector, technically supports 28 developing countries across Africa, Asia and South America to develop the right policies and programmes at country level to reduce stunting. More countries are being encouraged to take part and learn lessons from each other.

Notes to editors

1. One third of all child deaths are linked to malnutrition. Stunted children are less healthy, physically less able than their peers, may do less well at school and earn less.
2. The UN's World Health Assembly calculates that around 170 million children today will have their physical and mental potential limited through lack of adequate nutrition. The UN's World Health Assembly recently agreed a new global target to reduce the number of stunted children by 70 million by 2025.
3. Addressing malnutrition is ranked as one of the best ways to spend aid money effectively – every £1 spent generates the equivalent of £30 of benefits.

4. CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. For more information about the organisation, www.cgiar.org/
 5. For more information about HarvestPlus, <http://www.harvestplus.org/content/about-harvestplus>
 6. The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement is for all countries whose populations experience under-nutrition and for all stakeholders committed to providing support. For more information, www.scalingupnutrition.org
-

DFID - the Department for International Development

Contact our Press Office: 020 7023 0600 (Overseas +44 (0)20 7023 0600)

Get free-to-use photos, videos and features online: www.dfid.gov.uk/News/For-journalists

For breaking news, follow us on Twitter: @DFID_Press