The Costs of Undernutrition
- Over one-third of child deaths are due to undernutrition, mostly from increased severity of disease.¹
- Those who survive are at high risk for impaired cognitive development, which adversely affects the country’s productivity and development.
- Children who are undernourished between conception and age two are at high risk for impaired cognitive development, which adversely affects the country’s productivity and growth.
- Childhood anemia alone is associated with a 2.5% drop in adult wages.⁴

Where Does Burkina Faso Stand?
- 36% of children under the age of five are stunted, 19% are wasted, and 32% are underweight.²
- 16% of infants are born with a low birth weight.³
- Burkina Faso will not meet MDG 1c (halving 1990 rates of child underweight by 2015) with business as usual.⁵

As seen in Figure 1, the prevalence of stunting is higher in Burkina Faso compared to some countries in the Africa region with lower per capita incomes such as Zimbabwe, The Gambia, and Togo. It is possible to achieve better nutrition outcomes despite low income.

Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies Cause Hidden Hunger
Although they may not be visible to the naked eye, micronutrient deficiencies are widespread in Burkina Faso, as shown in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 1** Burkina Faso has Higher Rates of Stunting than Some Lower Income Countries in the Region
![Figure 1](image)

**FIGURE 2** High Rates of Vitamin A and Iron Deficiency Contribute to Lost Lives and Diminished Productivity
![Figure 2](image)
Solutions to Primary Causes of Undernutrition

**Poor Infant Feeding Practices**

- Only 1 in 5 newborns receive breast milk within one hour of birth.2
- Only 7% of infants under six months are exclusively breastfed.3
- During the important transition period to a mix of breast milk and solid foods between six and nine months of age, one-half of all infants are not fed appropriately with both breast milk and other foods.2

**Solution:** Support women and their families to practice optimal breastfeeding and ensure timely and adequate complementary feeding. Breast milk fulfills all nutritional needs of infants up to six months of age, boosts their immunity, and reduces exposure to infections. In high HIV settings, follow WHO’s 2009 HIV and infant feeding revised principles and recommendations.10

**High Disease Burden**

- Undernutrition increases the likelihood that a child will fall sick and also increases the severity of disease.
- Undernourished children who fall sick are much more likely to die from illness than well-nourished children.
- Parasitic infestation diverts nutrients from the body and can cause blood loss and anemia.

**Solution:** Prevent and treat childhood infection and other disease. Hand-washing, deworming, zinc supplements during and after diarrhea, and continued feeding during illness are important.

**Limited Access to Nutritious Food**

- Less than 1 in 10 households is food insecure as defined as per capita access to calories.4 Achieving food security, however, means ensuring quality and continuity of food access, in addition to quantity, for all household members.
- Dietary diversity is essential for food security.
- High levels of hidden hunger indicate that dietary diversity may be poor.

**Solution:** Involve multiple sectors including agriculture, education, transport, gender, the food industry, health and other sectors, to ensure that diverse, nutritious diets are available and accessible to all household members.

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**References**


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**World Bank Nutrition Related Activities in Burkina Faso**

**Projects:** The World Bank is supporting a US$40 million Agricultural Productivity and Food Security Project. Recently approved additional financing for the Health Sector Support and AIDS Project is also supporting community-based nutrition activities targeted to children under 5 years of age.

**Analytic Work:** A DHS report analyzing health, nutrition and population data, supported by the World Bank, USAID and UN agencies is scheduled for delivery next fiscal year. Financing from the Japan Trust Fund for Scaling-up Nutrition will also be supporting advisory work related to contracting out nutrition-related activities to civil society organizations.

**Addressing undernutrition is cost effective:** Costs of core micronutrient interventions are as low as US$0.05–3.60 per person annually. Returns on investment are as high as 8–30 times the costs.12