

UN chief hails progress in scaling up maternal and child nutrition worldwide



Photo: World Bank/Julio Pantoja

27 September 2012 – High-level political and private sector officials today met in New York to fight childhood and maternal under-nutrition with [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon praising the progress made so far, while stressing the importance of continuing to boost efforts on this front.

“Every household needs to be able to afford safe, nutritious foods. Markets need to be open and fair. The poorest people need to know they can count on social protection that will not let them go hungry,” Mr. Ban [said](#) at the high-level meeting on scaling up nutrition, held at the margins of the 67th session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ban praised the progress made by the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, which has been joined by 30 countries – including newest members Burundi and Kenya – which are home to 56 million children suffering from stunted growth due to chronic malnutrition.

The SUN Movement focuses on the critical 1,000-day window between pregnancy and a child's second birthday, when proper nutrition can mean the difference between health and sickness, life and death. Poor nutrition during this period can lead to stunted growth and impaired cognitive development, among other consequences.

The initiative seeks to integrate various sectors of society to improve nutrition and involves farmers' cooperatives, consumer associations, local and multinational businesses, health professionals, educators, lawyers, religious groups, human rights activists, development workers and politicians.

“The SUN Movement has not required any new institution, fund or programme. Instead, it has proposed an entirely new way of working,” Mr. Ban said. “SUN is rallying governments, civil society, the private sector and international donors. It is breaking down barriers separating different disciplines, and galvanizing experts in agriculture, health, social protection and finance.”

Mr. Ban also highlighted the Zero Hunger Challenge which he launched at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)) in June, which aspires to end malnutrition in pregnancy and early childhood, achieve 100 per cent access to adequate food all year round, make all food systems sustainable, double the productivity and income of small holders, and achieve a zero waste or loss of food.

“In our world of plenty, no one should be malnourished,” he said. “And in a world with no hunger, all food and agriculture would be sustainable, and no food would be lost or wasted.”

The Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), Anthony Lake, said preventing stunting can also help break the cycle of poverty. “Recent data from countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, Peru and others show that we can reduce stunting with the right policies and programmes, the right investments and of course a commitment to action.

“The momentum of the SUN Movement must now be matched by tangible results to put the world's youngest and most vulnerable on the path to a better future,” he added.

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