

Nutrients for All: The 1,000 Days



How is the future decided in 1,000 days?

Imagine a newborn baby. During the past 9 months, this baby used the nutrient-rich environment of her healthy mother to build a strong basis for the rest of her life. With exclusive breastfeeding from a well-nourished mother for the first six months after birth, followed by nutritious complementary food added to her mother's milk, this baby is strong and ready for the world.

This can and should be every baby. But it isn't. We want to partner with those who believe that integrated wellness programs during the 1,000 Days can drastically improve the health of pregnant women, and therefore the chances of success in life for their babies. The evidence is clear that combining full nourishment, primary healthcare, sanitation, and health and nutrition education – enabled and measured by modern information technology – will do just that. But the record is dismal. Consider the following:

- Without proper nourishment in the womb and first two years after birth, a child is far more likely to die. If she lives, she will never have the full capacity to succeed in life.
- In developing countries, malnutrition is the underlying cause of 35% of all deaths among children under age 5. Of those children remaining, 18% are underweight.
- In India, 47% of children are physically stunted by age 2, and thus mentally stunted also.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 40% of children under age 5 are stunted.



There is also growing evidence that malnourishment during the 1,000 days triggers genetic changes that predispose a child to diabetes later in life, and extend that to *her* children as well. Malnutrition and obesity are just different faces of the same underlying problem. Failure to invest early creates major health, social, and economic costs later in life.

Where does success in life begin? The global consensus says the critical period is this 1,000 Days. If a pregnant woman is malnourished, her fetus is as well, and her breast milk cannot provide what her infant needs. A child's wellness begins in the womb, so the key intervention point is with the pregnant woman. We must focus on a pregnant woman's "full nourishment," combined with primary healthcare, sanitation, and education, enabled and measured by modern information technology. This same integrated and holistic approach applies to wellness for infants from the moment of their birth.

This is a call to action. Join us.

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