

The Cost of HUNGER in Malawi



The Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) Study is led by the African Union Commission (AUC) and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency and supported by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP). COHA is a multi-country study aimed at estimating the economic and social impacts of child undernutrition in Africa.

Malawi has made remarkable progress in improving child health outcomes as evidenced by reduction in infant and under- five mortality. However, there has been slow progress in reducing malnutrition. Currently, the country has high levels of stunting among under- five children, which is an indication that chronic food and nutrition insecurity are still prevalent. The high prevalence of malnutrition has impacted greatly on education and health outcomes.

The Cost of Hunger in Africa Study, which was commissioned by the African Union and supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the World Food programme, in which Malawi participated, has confirmed the magnitude of the consequences that child malnutrition have on health, education as well as on the national economy. The study has highlighted that the country has incurred huge economic losses associated with under nutrition, the highest being the cost in loss of potential productivity.

The study findings have clearly shown that adequate nutrition is critical for one's physical and intellectual development, and work productivity, hence an integral element for the socio – economic development. It is in this context that we are determined as a Government, that moving forward; we need to channel adequate resources towards nutrition interventions. Government will also strengthen institutional and human capacities for effective delivery of nutrition services.

I would like to thank the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Rockefeller Foundation and the World Food Programme for providing financial support towards the production of the Report. Special thanks should also go to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the World Food Programme for their technical support. It is my hope that the findings in this report will inspire all stakeholders to expedite the implementation of programmes to ensure that child under nutrition is reduced.

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The COHA model is used to estimate the additional cases of morbidities, mortalities, school repetitions, school dropouts, and reduced physical capacity that can be directly associated to a person's undernutrition before the age of five, and the associated costs to the economy.



0-5 years

Undernourished children are at higher risk of anaemia, diarrhoea, and respiratory infections. These additional cases of illness are costly to the health system and families. Undernourished children are at higher risk of dying.



6-18 years

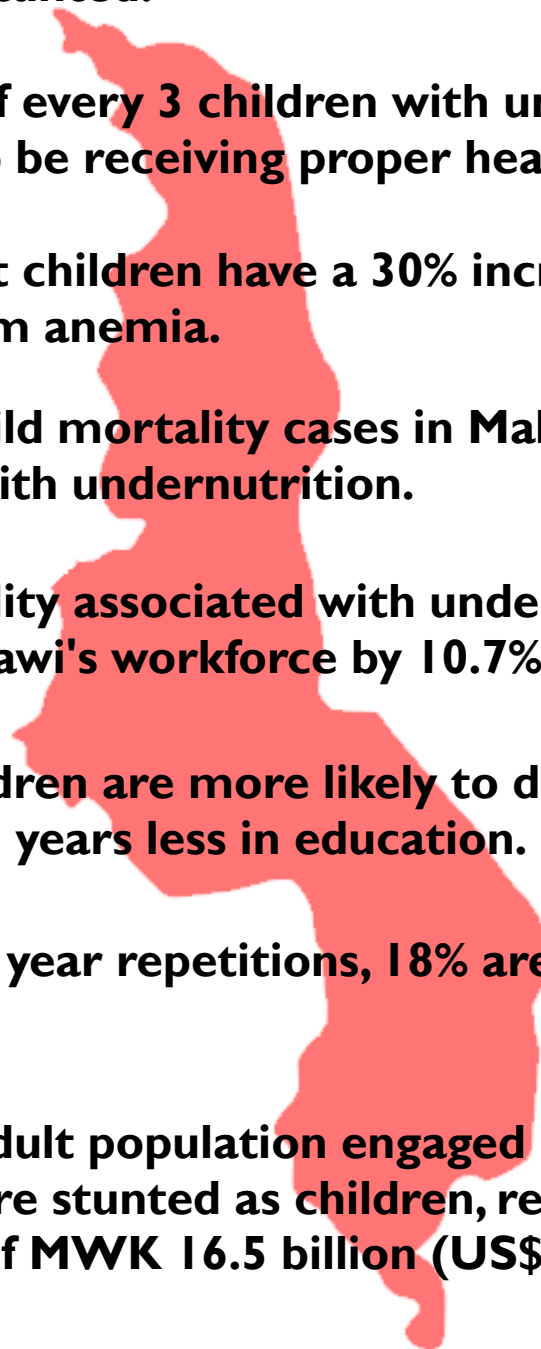
Stunted¹ children are at higher risk of repeating grades in school and at higher risk for dropping out of school. Additional instances of grade repetitions are costly to the education system and families.



15-64 years

If a child dropped out of school early and is working in non-manual labour, he/she may be less productive. If s/he is working in manual labour he/she has reduced physical capacity and may be less productive. People who are absent from the workforce due to undernutrition-related child mortalities represent lost economic productivity.

10 Things Everyone Should Know about Child Nutrition in Malawi*

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- 1** The total annual costs associated with child undernutrition are estimated at **MWK 147 billion (US\$ 597 million)**, equivalent to **10.3% of GDP**.
 - 2** Today, **1.4 million** or almost half of the children in Malawi are stunted.
 - 3** Only **1 out of every 3 children** with undernutrition are estimated to be receiving proper health attention.
 - 4** Underweight children have a **30% increased risk** of suffering from anemia.
 - 5** **23% of all child mortality cases** in Malawi are associated with undernutrition.
 - 6** Child mortality associated with undernutrition has reduced Malawi's workforce by **10.7%**.
 - 7** Stunted children are more likely to drop out of school, achieving **1.5 years less** in education.
 - 8** Of all school year repetitions, **18% are associated** with stunting.
 - 9** **66% of the adult population engaged** in manual activities were stunted as children, representing an annual loss of **MWK 16.5 billion (US\$ 67 million)** alone.
 - 10** Eliminating stunting in Malawi is a necessary step for inclusive and sustained development in the country.