

FACT FILE: HEALTH



What is health? The World Health Organisation defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not consisting only of the absence of disease or infirmity.

What leads to good health?

- Healthy balanced diet
- Frequent medical check-ups
- Safe drinking water
- Sanitation
- Exercise
- Vaccinations

What leads to bad health?

- Unbalanced diet
- No sanitation and clean water
- Smoking
- Alcohol
- No healthcare facilities (e.g. hospitals)
- No exercise

THE FACTS

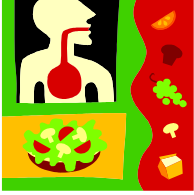
- Nutrition
- Sanitation
- Health services
- Tuberculosis
- Childbirth
- Malaria
- Water

Malnutrition means that 200 million people in Africa are undernourished and more than a third of the continent's children suffer from a range of mental and physical health problems

An average of 1 in 16 women still die in childbirth in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Uganda, only 13% have access to suitable sanitation!

Nutrition



Everybody needs food

Nutrition is a 3-part process. First, food or drink is consumed. Second, the body breaks down the food or drink into nutrients. Third, the nutrients travel through the bloodstream to different parts of the body where they are used as "fuel" and for many other purposes.

To give the body proper nutrition, a person has to eat and drink enough of the foods that contain key nutrients. These are: protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins, minerals, water and fibre. Not giving the body proper nutrition is known as malnutrition, which can lead to weakening of the body and health problems.

Nutrition is the taking in and the using of food and other nourishing material by the body. Not giving the body proper nutrition is known as malnutrition, which can lead to weakening of the body and health problems.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition can have many causes, such as insufficient calorie intake or an unbalanced diet, which, in turn can be the result of many circumstances, such as drought, poverty, or war.

Across Africa hunger and malnutrition continue to plague many millions of people and the situation across the continent is continuing to worsen.

One in three people are undernourished in the region.

In countries experiencing or recently involved in armed conflict, one in every two people does not receive enough nourishing food.

Africa is the only region where both the number and proportion of malnourished children is on the rise, and is the single biggest risk factor in the burden of disease. Forty-seven million Africa children under the age of five showed signs of chronic malnutrition in 2000.

So why are so many people in Africa malnourished? The main reason for this seems to be lack of food security.

Food Insecurity

People are not able to have food security due to things such as poverty and infrastructure, poor health and a lack of education.

So why are so many people in Africa malnourished? The main reason for this seems to be lack of food security. Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Poverty and infrastructure - People have little or no money to buy enough food to meet their nutritional needs. There are many reasons why people are poor for example inappropriate infrastructure within a country can cause problems with farming and agriculture, which is the main way poor people obtain their food.

Poor health - Diseases and infections such as HIV, TB or malaria make the body weak, therefore people suffering from illness are unable to work and make money to buy food. If the main person responsible for food security is ill, then the rest of the family can suffer, as they will not receive enough food.

Education - If a person is not educated, they may not know that they have to eat a balanced diet every day in order to stay healthy.

Sanitation



In Africa, four out of five deaths are linked to water and are therefore preventable. Other health issues cannot be effectively dealt with without clean water.

One of the most pressing problems in Sub-Saharan Africa is the deteriorating environment and its impact on health. Many people do not have access to safe drinking water. In Uganda, for instance, only 15% of the population have access to safe water and only 13% to adequate sanitation.

Community involvement in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of water provision, leads to lasting, sustainable solutions as the water source is the community's themselves. True development can only really come from enabling a community to help themselves

Health services



The lower health gains in Africa over the last 20 years seem to be largely accounted for by a very low level of progress in delivering health services to the poor.

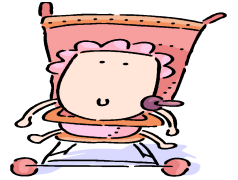
The health situation in East Africa is sadly getting worse. Almost 80% of the population lives in rural and remote areas where there are no working health structures, no roads and high levels of poverty

Only in the cities or larger towns do health centres or hospitals exist, and they carry a huge responsibility as they have to support all the other health facilities in their region. There are few doctors in these posts and the turnover of staff is high in these remote, cash-strapped institutions. There is little opportunity for these doctors to continue their training at these hospitals and in general they are poorly managed.

Added to that is the increasing health burden of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, plus high prevalence of childhood disabilities and poor quality of maternal services. A massive 85% of surgical needs remain unmet.

Childbirth

Having a healthy baby depends on the health of both parents and on the planning done prior to pregnancy. But the majority of pregnancies are unplanned, and if the woman is poor or does not have access to proper health care facilities, then her life and her unborn baby's life are under danger.



Maternal deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa account for about half the world's total, the two leading contributors being unsafe abortion and anaemia (due mainly to malaria). While coverage of skilled obstetric care at delivery improved in all other regions, it has remained stagnant in Africa. An average of 1 in 16 women still die in childbirth in SSA, compared to 1 in 3,500 in OECD countries.

Skilled care at child delivery is not very effective in Africa. The use of traditional birth attendants (rather than hospital nurses and doctors) has caused the deaths of many women. For example, the traditional birth attendant may not use hygienic equipment, causing infection for the mother and sometimes the baby.

What can be done?

1. Continuous labour support -- if the mother receives good and continuous support throughout labour the results are better birth outcomes, fewer surgical interventions, better breastfeeding outcomes, and the empowerment of women.
2. Governments need to promote the training of more health workers with child delivery skills.
3. Train TBAs to avoid harmful practices during delivery, recognise danger signals and refer complicated cases to higher-level care.



Case study

Zimbabwe: A "Health Club" approach to hygiene promotion

A district in southeastern Zimbabwe called Bikita (population of around 200,000) has for the past seven years been implementing an integrated rural water supply and sanitation project as part of the Zimbabwe National IRWSS Programme, funded by the Department For International Development. At the heart of the programme are the "Health Clubs", which increase health awareness and knowledge of villagers in a structured and friendly atmosphere.

The Health Club approach was first used by Juliet Waterkyn and the NGO ZimAhead, in three wards of Rusape District in eastern Zimbabwe. The obvious popularity amongst villagers witnessed during a field trip to Rusape by Bikita staff, lead to it being adopted as the chief health and hygiene training methodology for Bikita.

The health clubs are free to join, and offer a structured course of 16 health and hygiene related topics, as well as a number of home improvement tasks. The syllabus is taught by the Ministry Of Health, ward level Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs), nurses and specially trained village community workers (VCWs) using participatory tools. It has proved very popular since it was first introduced to villages in Bikita in 1997.

Both men and women have turned up regularly to their weekly meetings to learn and share experiences. Interestingly the original 16 week time frame to cover the 16 topics have in almost all cases been exceeded, as more people have come to join and club members often want to repeat lessons. This has necessitated the training of VCWs to keep the old clubs active, whilst the EHTs go on to open new clubs. To date most of Bikita District has been covered, with at least one health club opened in each VIDCO or village development committee area.

Shock tactics to get messages across have also proved popular. Just as with commercial advertising, things that make people shocked and grab their attention are more likely to stay in the mind and make people think. One of the slogans being used in Bikita reads "Musagovana Madhoti" or "don't share your shit". Aimed at informing the public of the dangers of not hand washing after using the toilet, it is

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) which may affect almost any tissue or organ of the body. The most common target of the disease, however, is the lungs.

In most areas of the world, the battle against tuberculosis is being fought but in Africa the disease has reached alarming proportions and the disease with a growing number of cases and deaths being related to HIV. In Africa TB incidence rates have tripled since 1990 in countries with high HIV prevalence and are rising across the African continent at 3-4% annually. HIV and TB form a lethal combination, each speeding the other's progress. HIV weakens the immune system. Someone who is HIV-positive and infected with TB is many times more likely to become sick with TB than someone infected with TB who is HIV-negative.

TB is preventable but many countries in Africa are too poor to afford the drugs needed to cure TB and vaccinations to prevent TB.

Current Events

WHO World Health Day 2005 - 7 April



Healthy mothers and children is the theme for World Health Day 2005. This is also the subject of the World Health Report which will be published on World Health Day. The slogan for World Health Day 2005 is "make every mother and child count", which reflects the reality that today; the health of women and children is not a high enough priority for many governments and the international community.

World TB Day 2005 - March 24

Stop TB Partnership Five thousand people die from tuberculosis every day, although the disease is both preventable and curable. The Global Partnership to Stop TB is the joining of more than 300 partners of which 50% of them are NGOs, non-governmental organizations, but there are also governments, academia, donor countries, corporate sector, and the private sector. The Partnership's role is to ensure that TB control goes ahead, that TB control's agenda is always up to date, and ensure that all the partners have a say, have a voice.

World Water Week – Stockholm August 21 – 27 2005

often chanted at health club meetings. Bikita cannot however claim the rights to the saying, as it was used by Steven Esrey during a presentation that he made to a conference on sanitation in Zimbabwe in 1999, and then got taken back to the field. " Genzai maoko nekasipo mabva muchimbuzi" or "wash your hands with a small piece of soap after you visit the toilet" is another message that also appears on project T-shirts.

The Health Club approach has been appreciated by all involved. It has made a difference to people's lives and it has made the job of the health staff more interesting and fulfilling, helping them to enjoy and do their work more effectively, as they see how well their work is received. It has also almost certainly already saved lives

A cholera epidemic in the district in 1999 only affected villages that at that time had not been covered by the health club hygiene education. Proof of how effective the programme was!

A KABP (Knowledge Attitudes Behaviour and Practices) study undertaken in 1999 showed definite increases in health and hygiene awareness and safe practices in areas with health clubs (Mathew & Mukuwe, "Health clubs - hygiene education in Bikita IRWSSP", 25th WEDC Conference proceedings Addis Ababa Ethiopia 1999 pp 98 -101. This paper is available.)

To sum up, of particular importance are:

- The structured nature of the health and hygiene education on offer, with repeated lessons and tasks bringing home the message and giving clear vision of the problem and the solution, far more successfully for example than "one-off sessions" held for mothers visiting clinics.
- The enthusiasm the teaching group brings, both for communities and staff, generating ownership of the process.

The commitment of both communities and staff to see an improvement in their areas once they understand the need and have ownership of the means to make a difference

GLOSSARY

Health - A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Tuberculosis – An infectious disease caused by a bacterium (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) which may affect almost any tissue or organ of the body. The most common target of the disease, however, is the lungs

Nutrition – The process by which an individual takes in and uses food and liquid to maintain life and health.

Malnutrition - A condition that results when a person does not get enough nutritious food. But also includes overfeeding and excessive or insufficient amounts of individual nutrients in the diet.

Food security - Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Sanitation - Maintaining clean, hygienic conditions that help prevent disease through services such as garbage collection and wastewater disposal

WHO - In addition to its work in eradicating disease, the World Health Organisation also carries out campaigns — for example, to boost consumption of [vegetables](#) worldwide, or to discourage [tobacco](#) consumption.

RESEARCH LINKS

<http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2005/en/> For more information on World Health Day.

<http://www.stoptb.org/WTBD2005/> For more information on tuberculosis

<http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/index.htm> For more on childbirth

<http://www.wsp.org/> To learn more about hygiene and sanitation in Africa, check out the Water and Sanitation Program

<http://www.worldbank.org> The World Bank is actively involved in improving health, nutrition, and population outcomes among the poor.

<http://www.irc.nl/page/104> Click here to learn more about water and sanitation and the Zimbabwe: A "Health Club" approach to hygiene promotion.



Health: Discussion Points

Can you think of some things that can lead to either good or bad health? How have some of these issues affected you?

Why do you think good nutrition is important? In Africa, what are the main reasons for food insecurity?

What is most important in combating malnutrition, education or foreign aid?

What are some of the problems people have in some parts of Africa where there is little sanitation?

Why is good sanitation so important?