

What is Hidden Hunger?

- Hidden hunger, or micronutrient deficiency, is a major public health problem in developing countries caused by a lack of essential vitamins and minerals (e.g. vitamin A, zinc, iron, iodine) in the diet. Often, the signs of this form of malnutrition are 'hidden', as individuals may 'look alright' but suffer extremely negative impacts on health and well-being. For example, children may be stunted, have poor night vision or suffer frequently from illness. Adults, too, may succumb more frequently to illness and fatigue easily.
- Hidden hunger can lead to illness, blindness, premature death, reduced productivity, and impaired mental development, particularly among women and children in developing countries.
- 1 out of 3 people in developing countries suffers from hidden hunger, which increases their vulnerability to infection, birth defects, and impaired development.
- People suffering from hidden hunger have diets that are deficient in micronutrients. They habitually eat large amounts of staple food crops (such as maize, wheat, and rice) that are high in calories but lack sufficient micronutrients, and low amounts of foods that are rich in micronutrients such as fruits, vegetables, and animal and fish products.
- People suffering from hidden hunger are often too poor to be able to afford foods that are more nutritious, or otherwise lack access to these foods.

For More Information

- The Micronutrient Initiative (www.micronutrient.org)
- World Health Organization (www.who.int/nutrition/topics/micronutrients/en/)
- HarvestPlus (www.HarvestPlus.org)

HarvestPlus leads a global effort to improve nutrition and public health by developing and disseminating staple food crops that are rich in vitamins and minerals. We work with public and private sector partners in more than 40 countries. HarvestPlus is part of the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) which helps realize the potential of agricultural development to deliver gender-equitable health and nutritional benefits to the poor. CGIAR is a global agriculture research partnership for a food secure future. Its science is carried out by its 15 research centers in collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations. The HarvestPlus program is coordinated by two of these centers, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).



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