

# Bangladesh still facing malnutrition: Speakers

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## 'Scaling up Nutrition: An Urgent Call for Commitment and Multi-Sectoral Action'



BRAC Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed

Despite progress in many health and development indicators, Bangladesh is still one of the 36 countries with the highest burden of malnutrition, with 36 million people either malnourished or chronically underfed.

Speakers the observation at a meeting Wednesday styled “Scaling up Nutrition: An Urgent Call for Commitment and Multi-Sectoral Action,” held at capital’s Brac Inn Centre.

Alarming, about 41% of children are stunted, 16% wasted or too thin for their height, while 33% suffer from anemia, they said, adding that an “unacceptable” 53,000 children die each year from preventable complications resulting from chronic malnutrition.

Professor Tahmeed Ahmed, director of the Centre for Nutrition and Food Security of ICDDR, presented a research paper at the programme.

He said 35% children had low birth weight and 600,000 children suffered from severe acute malnutrition (Sam). 17% children suffered from diabetics in the non-slum areas while 6% in the slum areas.

Discussants said there was substantial evidence that a coordinated approach with proven and cost effective interventions could lead to healthy development and economic productivity of individuals and societies.

However, the evidence recognised that nutrition was a multi-sectoral problem with multi-sectoral solutions, they said.

Nutrition solution must be identified and scaled up in health, nutrition, women's empowerment, social protection, agriculture, food security, education rural development and poverty reduction by collective action, they said.

Speakers also said nutrition investments could help break the cycle of poverty and increase a country's Gross Domestic Product by at least 2-3% annually. Investing \$1 in nutrition can result in a \$30 return in increased health, schooling and economic productivity.

They suggested that instead of focusing solely on health, a multi-sectoral approach was needed for bringing about fast outcomes in terms of nutrition improvement.

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairperson of Brac, presided over the programme. He said it was high time to make people aware of nutrition issues. People who had been working on nutrition, including the media, needed to stand on the same platform.

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