

The Daily Star

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Children Under 5

36pc underweight

Discussion told

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Participants at a roundtable on “Multi-sectoral Approaches to Nutrition” at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday. Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) in partnership with The Daily Star organised the event. Photo: Star

Almost 36 percent of the children under the age of five in Bangladesh are underweight, said speakers at a discussion at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

Citing data from Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2011 they further said 41 percent of all children under the age of five show stunting as a result of malnutrition.

The roundtable titled “Multi-sectoral Approaches to Nutrition” was organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) in partnership with The Daily Star.

“Under-nutrition costs over Tk 7,000 crore in loss of productivity, because of the life-long impacts it bears,” said Dr Rukhsana Haider, chairperson of Training and Assistance for Health and Nutrition Foundation.

Dr Ruhul Amin of Dhaka Shishu Hospital lamented that no one gives medical treatment to children suffering from malnutrition.

“There is a link between malnourishment and cancer,” said Prof Ferdousi Begum, obstetrician at Sir Salimullah Medical College.

A lot of this under-nutrition can be combated by ensuring that mothers give nothing but breast milk to the baby for the first six months, added Dr Rukhsana.

“However birth attendants do not tell this important bit of information to pregnant mothers,” she said.

They also do not counsel them on the importance of taking zinc and iron supplements during pregnancy, added Rukhsana.

Dr Mohammad Anisul Haque, program coordinator at Brac, stated that most babies start losing weight during the period when solid food is given.

“This is because the complementary feeding often constitutes of nothing but rice, and lacks important nutritional elements found in vegetables and meat,” Dr Fatima Parveen Chowdhury, director of Centre for Medical Education, explained.

Nutritionist Lalita Bhattacharjee revealed that vegetable and fruit consumption per head in Bangladesh is about half of that of the WHO standard of 400g per day.

Speakers also called upon the local governments to make sure that important health and nutrition tips are delivered to the people.

Local governments must proactively deliver services that can improve nutrition, urged Selina Amin of Plan International.

“The media too, should focus on dispensing nutrition-related information. Newspapers must write more, and television channels and radio stations must give more air-time,” urged Shishir Morol, health reporter of Prothom Alo.

Dr Ferdousi Begum, country manager of FHI360, also spoke at the discussion moderated by Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor of The Daily Star. Hasibur Rahman, executive director of MRDI, gave the welcome speech while Alive and Thrive’s Bangladesh programme’s advocacy team leader Belal Uddin gave the vote of thanks.

Link: <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/36pc-underweight/>