

Foreword

The nutrition situation in Pakistan is very serious. In the past three decades the stunting rate for children under five has gone up from 42 to 44 per cent. This means that 11.8 million children under five were stunted in 2011, compared to 6.35 million in 1985.

Some successful initiatives like salt iodisation, school feeding and social protection have had a positive impact but these initiatives have to be scaled-up and fast-tracked as a part of a comprehensive national nutrition plan to make a decisive impact on the nutrition situation.

As articles in this *IDS Bulletin* have pointed out, the convergence of three important events, i.e. the devastating floods of 2010 and 2011, the decentralisation of the health system to the provinces and the 2011 National Nutrition Survey have created significant momentum for breaking the logjam of undernutrition in Pakistan. This in turn will require policymakers

to recognise that better nutrition is the foundation for economic growth and social cohesion and that action is required on multiple fronts, not only within health, and with support from all the stakeholders – the government, civil society and development partners.

The publication of this special issue of the *IDS Bulletin* is very timely as it coincides with fresh elections, after which the newly elected government will be looking for major initiatives that have a longer-term impact on children. At least one major political party has promised in its manifesto to make the ‘Right to Food’ a fundamental right of every citizen within a reasonable timeframe. We must seize the moment.

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