



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
126th Assembly and related meetings
Kampala (Uganda), 31 March to 5 April 2012



**Panel discussion on "Tackling malnutrition in young children:
The role of parliamentarians"**

Tuesday, 3 April 2012, 9 a.m. - 12 noon
Gardenia, ground floor, Imperial Royale Hotel

The ongoing famine in the Horn of Africa has become the latest humanitarian disaster. More than 300,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and are in peril. This is only the tip of the iceberg; 20 million children around the world are suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Malnutrition is a hidden crisis that threatens to reverse development gains. There are however effective and efficient ways to address this crisis. The costs of intervention are small; the payoff is large; and the MDGs will not be met unless this crisis is tackled.

Malnutrition is not merely a result of too little food, but of a combination of factors, namely: insufficient protein, energy and micronutrients; frequent infections or disease; poor care and feeding practices; inadequate health services; and unsafe water and sanitation.

Key tools in the effort to overcome malnutrition include an adequate diet, which includes immediate and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and continued breastfeeding with age-appropriate complementary foods, micronutrients, prevention and treatment of disease and proper care and feeding practices.

Furthermore, the need to protect the rights of women and girls is critical. Wherever women are discriminated against, malnutrition tends to be prevalent. Children born to uneducated mothers are twice as likely to die in infancy as those born to mothers with as little as four years of schooling. Reproductive health, including birth-spacing of at least three years, also reduces the risk of stunting and death.

The objective of the IPU-UNICEF Panel is twofold:

- (1) Inform legislators of the factors that help tackle malnutrition in children between birth and the age of two and in pregnant women.
- (2) Facilitate an exchange of views on what parliaments and their members can do to support progress. Particular attention will be paid to policies to improve mother and child nutrition; their integration in national development plans; the provision of essential supplies, and food and training for community workers who feed children and keep them healthy.

The panel will include members of parliaments, representatives of civil society as well as UNICEF representatives.