



NUTRITION AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

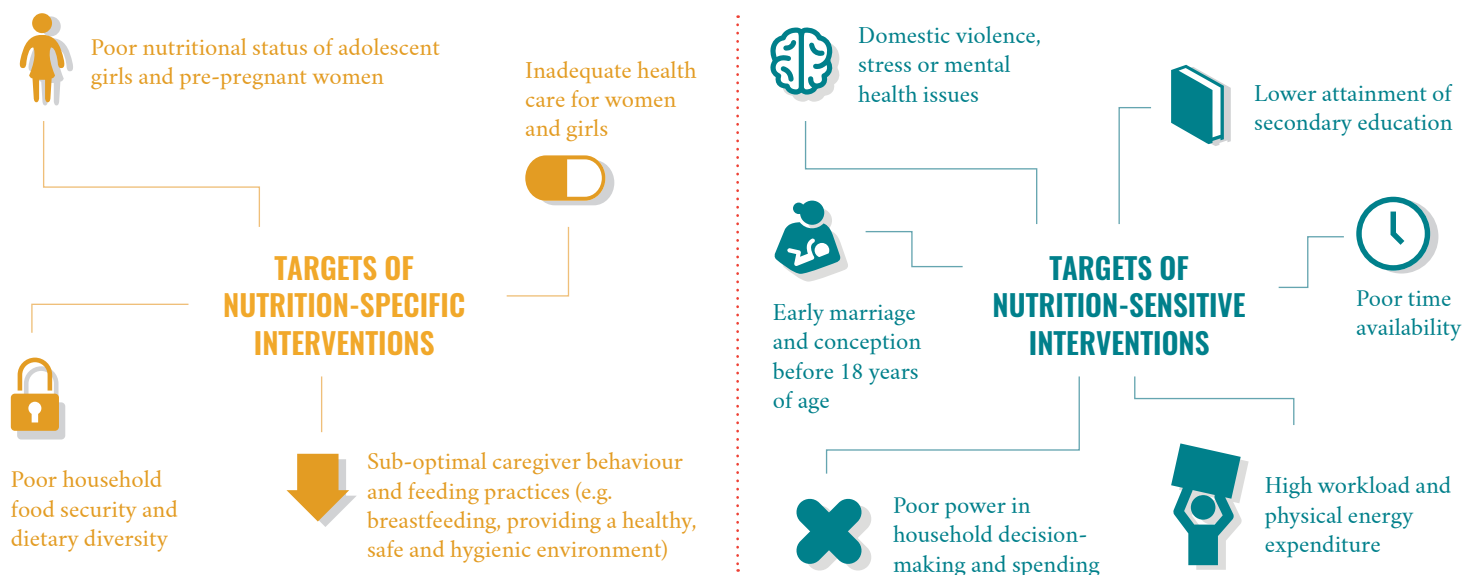
Investments aimed at women – especially those focused on reproductive health and family planning, education and nutrition – can help improve nutritional outcomes in children and ensure that future generations achieve their full potential.

- Nearly half of reductions in all child underweight from 1970 to 1995 can be attributed to increases in women's education.¹
- Child nutrition outcomes have been shown to significantly improve when women and mothers have more control over the use of household resources.²

There is an especially strong case for investing in adolescent girls as a way to reduce risk factors for undernutrition, including through delaying the age of first birth and reducing child marriage.

- Adolescence is the second and last growth spurt, and determines height in adulthood.³ If an adolescent girl becomes a mother before adulthood, then her nutritional status and stature at this point will also influence her baby's size and weight.
- *The nutritional impact of young birth:* A review of data from Brazil, Guatemala, India, the Philippines and South Africa found that babies born to mothers 19 years old or younger were 46% more likely to be stunted at 2 years of age, and 38% less likely to complete secondary schooling, compared to mothers aged 20-24 years.⁴
- *Nutritional outcomes of children of women married before adulthood:* A study of Indian National Family Health Survey data found that children of women married as minors were 85% more likely to be stunted and 20% more likely to be wasted compared to mothers married as adults.⁵

NUTRITION-SPECIFIC AND NUTRITION-SENSITIVE INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND WOMEN CAN HELP IMPROVE NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES IN CHILDREN BY TACKLING BOTH IMMEDIATE AND UNDERLYING CAUSES OF UNDERNUTRITION.⁶



The empowerment of women and girls is a key entry point to improving nutrition outcomes at household, community and national levels. Delivering on SDG 5 – “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls” – will also support efforts to achieve the nutrition SDG targets.

The Nutrition in the Global Agenda Series, issued by The Power of Nutrition, aims to clarify why and how investments in nutrition can maximise other development objectives and be a major pathway towards the achievement of the world's shared Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.



The Power of Nutrition is a charitable foundation whose primary focus is improving the nutritional welfare and care of young children and adolescent mothers in Africa and Asia. Visit www.powerofnutrition.org and follow @gofundnutrition to learn more about our work.

¹ Smith, Lisa C and Haddad, Lawrence, 'Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: A Cross-Country Analysis', Washington DC., 2000.

² International Food Policy Research Institute, 'Household Decisions, Gender and Development: A Synthesis of Recent Research', edited by Quisumbing, Agnes R, Washington DC., International Food Policy Research Institute, 2003.

³ Vir, Sheila C, Improving Women's Nutrition Imperative for Rapid Reduction of Childhood Stunting in South Asia: Coupling of Nutrition Specific Interventions with Nutrition Sensitive Measures Essential, Maternal & Child Nutrition, vol. 12 Suppl. 1, pp. 72-90, 2016.

⁴ Fall, Caroline HD et al., 'Association between Maternal Age at Childbirth and Child and Adult Outcomes in Offspring: A Prospective Study in Five Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries (COHORTS Collaboration)', The Lancet Global Health, vol. 3 no. 7, pp. e366-e377, July 2015.

⁵ Raj, Anita et al., 'The Effect of Maternal Child Marriage on Morbidity and Mortality of Children Under 5 in India: Cross Sectional Study of a Nationally Representative Sample', BMJ, vol. 340, 2010.

⁶ Table adapted from Vir, 2016.