

# MALNUTRITION AND VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY IN MALAWI

Making  
sense of  
**sugar**

In less-developed countries, such as Malawi, micronutrient deficiency is a serious public health issue that presents a particular risk to children and pregnant women. Micronutrients enable the body to produce enzymes, hormones and other substances essential for growth and development and without these micronutrients – which include Vitamin A - the body cannot function properly.

## MALNUTRITION:

### INDICATORS AND CAUSES

Where someone has micronutrient deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in an intake of energy and/or nutrients – such as Vitamin A – these factors **result in malnutrition**<sup>1</sup>. Malawi Demographic and Health survey established that micronutrient deficiencies such as a low intake of Vitamin A are a **serious threat to child health and survival**<sup>2</sup>.

### MALNUTRITION INDICATORS

#### Children aged under 5

Stunting (too short for age)

Underweight (too thin for age)

Wasting (too thin for height)

Repeated infections include:

- Acute respiratory infections
- Diarrhoea
- Malaria

### CAUSES OF MALNUTRITION<sup>3</sup>



Food  
insecurity



Lack of safe  
drinking water



Sanitation



Poor  
hygiene

## WHY

### VITAMIN A IS NEEDED BY THE BODY



Necessary for the immune system and helps to **prevent stunting, underweight and wasting**



**Maintains the epithelial tissue** in the body - a viscous fluid that forms a protective cover around organs for example in the case of the eye, it forms a protective layer around the eyeball



**Prevents eye damage**



**Reduces severity of infections** such as measles and diarrhoea in children and speeds up recovery from illness<sup>4</sup>

#### References

- 1 <https://www.who.int/features/qa/malnutrition/en/>
- 2 [www.nsomalawi.mw](http://www.nsomalawi.mw) Malawi Demographic and Health Survey, 2000
- 3 National Multisector Nutrition Policy 2018-2022
- 4 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2015-2016, page 167



## TACKLING THE ISSUE OF VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY

A National Micronutrient survey<sup>5</sup> undertaken by the National Statistical Office on behalf of the Ministry of Health concluded that **sugar was a suitable foodstuff for fortification**. It is a food staple and more easily distributed in comparison with some other manufactured products or ingredients<sup>6</sup>.

### VITAMIN A FORTIFICATION – JOURNEY SO FAR

- **2012-2014**  
Illovo Sugar Malawi commenced production of Vitamin A fortified sugar, supporting the Government of Malawi's initiative to introduce a fortification programme, working alongside donor agencies such as UNICEF, USAID and Irish Aid
- **2015**  
Illovo Sugar Malawi funds the sugar fortification programme solely – spending in excess of K1.1 billion<sup>7</sup>
- **2017/18 onwards**  
Around 110,000 tonnes of fortified sugar produced and available to the Malawian population annually

## ILLOVO SUGAR MALAWI'S CONTRIBUTION TO TACKLING VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY

- ✓ In support of the Government of Malawi, **run Child Health Days twice a year**, including Vitamin A supplementation and rapid nutritional screening to assessing nutrition status of children under the age of five, as well as control programmes for non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes
- ✓ **12 company-run clinics staffed by doctors**, and other clinical and auxiliary staff focusing on health promotion, preventative services and primary health care, seeing an average of 25,000 people per month
- ✓ Illovo produced **600,000 tonnes of fortified sugar** (2012/13-2017/18)
- ✓ In 2017/18, it is estimated **two million people<sup>8</sup>** were reached through the Sugar Fortification Programme

### CONTRIBUTING TO GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI'S EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE:

- World Health Assembly targets from the World Health Organisation to reduce stunting by 40% by 2025
- Achieving Sustainable Development Goal number two (zero hunger) by 2030
- Reduce micronutrient deficiency in target population of under-fives
- Improve nutrition for wider population

## THE CURRENT PICTURE IN MALAWI

In recent years Malawi has **registered improvements in a number of nutrition indicators** related to micronutrient deficiencies across all age groups, including children under the age of 5 years old:

Between 2010 - 2015/16



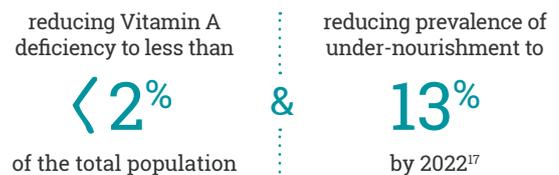
Between 2001 - 2015/16

VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY\* **59%<sup>15</sup> » 4%<sup>16</sup>**

\*For children under the age of 5 years old

## ILLOVO SUGAR MALAWI'S ROLE

To continue to support the Government of Malawi in:



through access to the company-run health care clinics and the sugar fortification programme.

### References cont'd

- 5,6 www.nsomalawi.mw National Micronutrient Survey 2009
- 7,8 Illovo Sugar (Malawi) plc Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, October 2017: <http://www.illovosugarafrika.com/UserContent/Documents/Illovo-Impact-Report-Malawi-Dec17.pdf>
- 9 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2010
- 10 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2015/16, page 159
- 11 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2010
- 12 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2015/16, page 156
- 13 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2010
- 14 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2015/16, page 159
- 15 www.nsomalawi.mw National Micronutrient Survey 2001
- 16 www.nsomalawi.mw MDHS 2015/16
- 17 The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III page 195