

## G8 Called on to Better Address Malnutrition

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A medical aid group says if G8 leaders want to improve mother and child health, they must first solve the malnutrition problem. Doctors Without Borders, also known as MSF, is calling for "fundamental changes" in addressing malnutrition, as well as "new sustainable funding resources." The group says malnutrition affects 195 million people worldwide — most in sub-Saharan Africa — and is the "underlying cause of at least one-third of the 8 million annual deaths of children under age 5."

Marilyn McHarg, General Director of MSF Canada, says, "There's a real risk that the maternal-child health agenda will not move forward. We will not be able to improve the situation worldwide if we are not looking (at) and addressing malnutrition." She says it's not necessarily the amount of food aid being provided that's at issue, but rather the quality. "We are very concerned about the fact that a lot of G8 countries are providing food that is sub-standard from the perspective that it is not addressing the nutritional needs of children worldwide." It's not enough to provide corn-soy blend or wheat. Foods that get used as porridge," she says. The MSF official says more "higher quality" foods are needed to ensure children's survival, what she calls "comprehensive nutritional activities." She adds, "We see a very strong need for micro-nutrient supplements, for ready-to-use therapeutic foods like the peanut-paste mixtures that can exist. And this needs to be in combination with the other types of foods that are already accessible." MSF says it agrees with a World Bank estimate that it would cost (US) \$12 billion per year to address malnutrition in the most affected countries. It calls donor funding during the global economic slowdown "insufficient, volatile and unpredictable." McHarg says, "It's a matter of making sure there are sufficient funds for intervention over time." Sharply reducing hunger is one the Millennium Development Goals that come due in 2015. G8 and G20 leaders are expected to discuss the issue at their summits in Canada.