



Malnutrition in Guatemala: Zero Hunger Pact



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Abstract

- 50% of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition in Guatemala
- This number can increase to 90% in certain regions of the country, particularly the Western Highlands
- The rate of malnutrition is double in indigenous communities compared to non-indigenous
- Despite having nearly five times the GDP per capita of Haiti, the two countries demonstrate similar rates of malnutrition

The Zero Hunger Pact

- In 2012 the Guatemalan government unveiled the Zero Hunger Pact
- The ultimate goals of the public health intervention are to reduce chronic malnutrition by 10% by 2015 and combat seasonal and acute malnutrition
- The idea is to work within the crucial first 1,000 days, from inception to the age of two
- They aim to break the 'cycle' of malnutrition
- The program involves direct nutritional supplements to children and mothers as well as promoting breast-feeding and improving hygiene practices
- Improve resilience between May and August through educational programs to improve on family agricultural techniques, having ready-to-use high nutrient foods available to be dispersed on the community level, improving upon the Food and Nutrition Service's ability to gather information and by providing a temporary work plan for the unemployed
- Supplementary focus on providing clean water, sanitation, and waste disposal, education on hygiene and sanitation practices, and reducing illiteracy

Challenges

- Limited tax base reduces the funding and effectiveness of the program
- Possible that goals are too modest to intact the virtuous social cycle that they hope for
- Systemic issues behind poverty such as lack of agrarian reform and increased vulnerability to climate change are not addressed
- All are factors that could hinder the success of the project

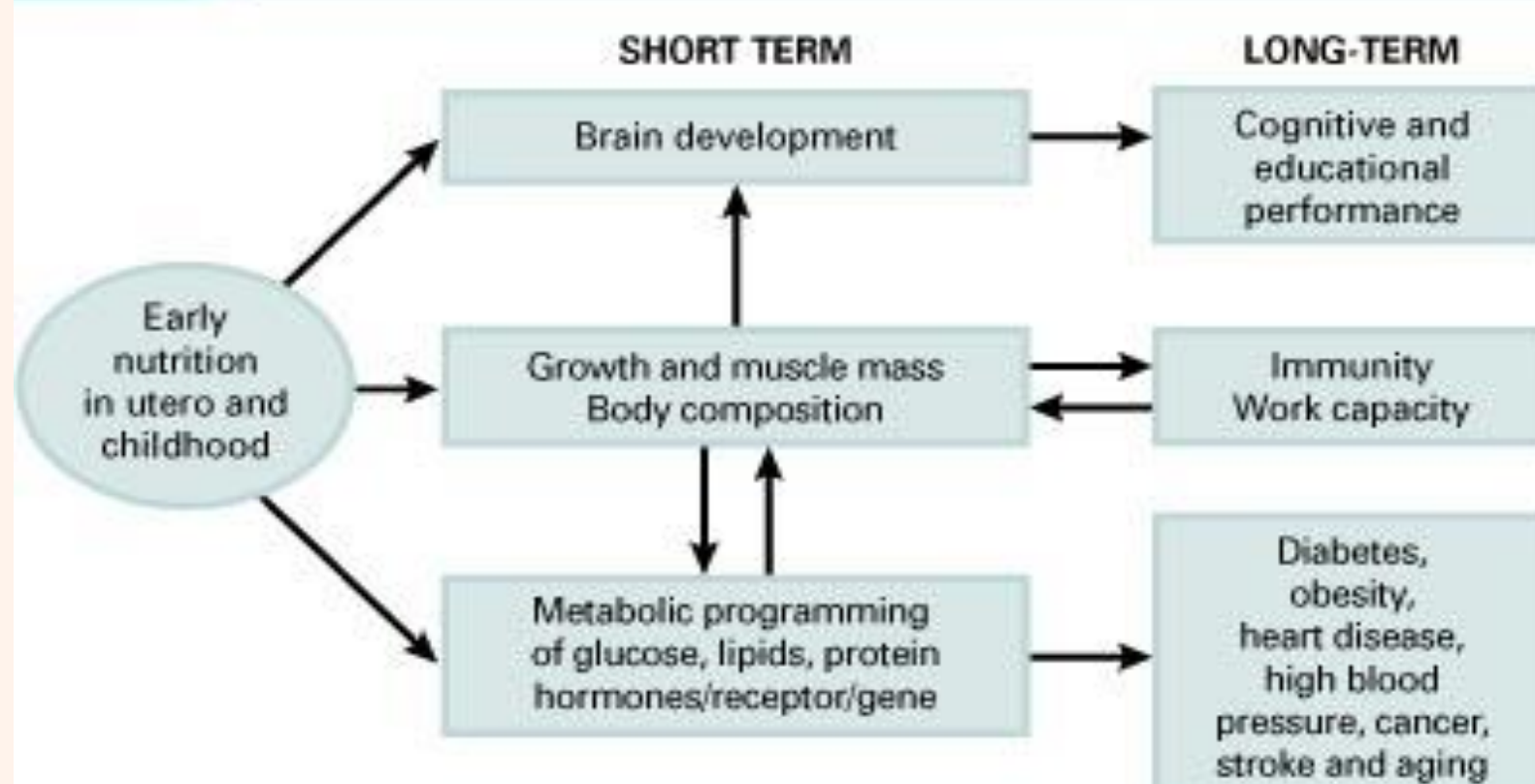
Conclusions

- The program is still on going, therefore, there are no results at this time
- The program does mark an impressive commitment too addressing this serious health issue by looking at the social determinants of health
- Demonstrates intra and inter governmental cooperation with twenty-four different jointly responsible branches of government working together with outside governments.

Effects of Malnutrition

- The biggest detrimental health factors of malnutrition are stunting and a weakening of the immune system.
- Stunting is the underdevelopment of a child's physical and mental potential
- Especially at an early age, malnutrition can affect key cognitive development.
- Weakening of the immune system leaves a child more vulnerable to illness.

Figure 3 The short-term and long-term effects of early nutrition



Literature cited

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