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Child malnutrition and the Millennium Development Goals: Much haste but less speed

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a framework for measuring progress of nations. Several of these goals relate to child malnutrition, which remains an important contributor to child morbidity and mortality accounting for approximately 45% of child deaths globally. A high proportion of undernourished children still live in Africa and parts of Asia and the uneven rate of reduction in prevalence of various types of child malnutrition among different income groups worldwide are worrying. Attempts to reduce child malnutrition should therefore begin from the grassroots by improving primary health care services in developing countries with particular focus on basic requirements. Adequate nutrition should be provided from birth, through infancy, preschool and early childhood to adolescence. The overall strategy should be one of careful and meticulous planning involving all development sectors with an emphasis on bottom-up approach within a stable and disciplined polity; the MDGs will only be useful tools if they are seen not as narrow objectives with unidirectional interventions but as multifaceted and co-ordinated. The setting of deadlines whether 2015 or 2035 should not be emphasized so as to avoid hasty decision making. The top priority should be the implementation of the essential social services of basic education, primary health care, nutrition, reproductive health care, water and sanitation in partnership with the developed economies.

Biography

Raphael S Oruamabo is currently the Provost of the College of Medical Sciences of the University of Science and Technology in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He is a Paediatrician with special interests in Neonatology. Outside Nigeria, he has worked in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and a onetime Consultant to UNICEF on diarrhoeal disease. He is a council member of the Commonwealth Association of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition (CAPGAN). He has over 70 publications in peer-reviewed journals.

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