



# The slow violence of malnutrition

Improving child nutrition is a long-term investment in human capital, which has a triple dividend for the children of today, the adults of tomorrow and the next generation of children.

The nutritional status of South Africa's children is deteriorating. One in four children under the age of five is stunted, a sign of chronic undernutrition that has remained unchanged for 20 years.

Over the same period, South Africa has seen a steady increase in children being overweight or obese. One in eight children under the age of five is overweight or obese, double the global average.

These were some of the findings of the 2020 South African Child Gauge, published annually by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in partnership with the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence in Human Development and Food Security.



The Gauge details South Africa's progress in realising children's rights to adequate food and nutrition and the impact of malnutrition. There is much that the state can do, and the Gauge outlines a range of opportunities for double-duty actions to address the double burden of malnutrition, starting early during the antenatal period and extending across the life course.

## Ways we can improve:

The urgent establishment of a national food and nutrition security council to provide political leadership at the highest level in the presidency, with the authority to hold government departments accountable and to drive concerted and consolidated action for children across a range of sectors, from health, education and social development to trade and industry.

Improving child nutrition is a long-term investment in human capital, which has a triple dividend for the children of today, the adults of tomorrow and the next generation of children. It is also a great equaliser, helping to level the playing field by improving children's cognitive development and enhancing economic productivity in adulthood."

**Suggested citation:** May J, Witten C & Lake L (eds) (2020) South African Child Gauge 2020. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

**Download the Child Gauge:** <https://bit.ly/3elOmpQ>