

Editorial

Addressing stunting reduction: The role of midwives and nurses

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ABSTRACT

Stunting remains a significant public health concern, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where it affects millions of children due to chronic malnutrition. This editorial highlights the critical role of midwives and nurses in addressing stunting through maternal education, nutritional support, and healthcare interventions. Midwives play a key role in antenatal care, maternal nutrition counseling, and breastfeeding promotion, while nurses contribute through growth monitoring, nutritional counseling, immunization, and community outreach. Strengthening healthcare professionals' capacity, improving infrastructure, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration are essential to reducing stunting. Empowerment, family involvement, and social movements can further enhance public health outcomes.

Keywords: child nutrition; maternal health; midwives; nurses; public health interventions; stunting

Stunting, defined as low height-for-age in children under five, is a critical indicator of chronic malnutrition and poor health (WHO, 2021). It affects cognitive development, increases susceptibility to diseases, and hampers economic productivity in adulthood (Black et al., 2013). Addressing stunting requires a multi-sectoral approach, with healthcare professionals, especially midwives and nurses, playing a fundamental role in prevention and intervention strategies. In Asia, where poverty, food insecurity, and cultural practices influence dietary habits, midwives and nurses must navigate unique challenges to effectively address stunting (UNICEF, 2020). The prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age is presented in Table 1.

Improving women's nutrition imperative for rapid reduction of childhood stunting in South Asia: coupling of nutrition-specific interventions with nutrition-sensitive measures essential were mentioned in Figure 1.

Therefore, stunting, a significant public health issue, affects millions of children worldwide, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. It results from chronic malnutrition and leads to long-term adverse health and developmental outcomes. Midwives and nurses play a crucial role in preventing and managing stunting through maternal and child health interventions, nutrition education, and community engagement. This article summarizes their roles in addressing stunting and highlights the impact of their efforts on child growth and development, with a particular focus on Asian populations as follows in Table 2.

Table 1. Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age (percent)

	2000	2005	2010	2012	2015	2020	2022
World	33.0	31.1	27.9	26.3	24.6	22.7	22.3
Asia and the Pacific	38.0	35.3	31.2	29.2	26.7	23.9	23.4
Eastern Asia	19.3	13.1	9.0	7.7	6.6	5.3	4.9
Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand	31.2	36.6	40.3	40.9	41.9	43.6	44.0
South-eastern Asia	37.2	34.3	31.6	30.4	29.0	27.3	26.4
Southern Asia	48.1	46.4	42.6	40.3	37.0	32.2	30.5

Source: Based on UNICEF, WHO & World Bank. 2023

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Conclusion

Midwives and nurses are the key people to handle stunting, enhancing maternal education, nutrition support, and health problem management among lay people in developing countries. Strengthening their capacity, improving healthcare infrastructure, and promoting community collaboration are factors that midwives and nurses should consider when they handle stunting situations. Therefore, empowerment, family member involvement, and social movement can reduce stunting and improve public health outcomes.

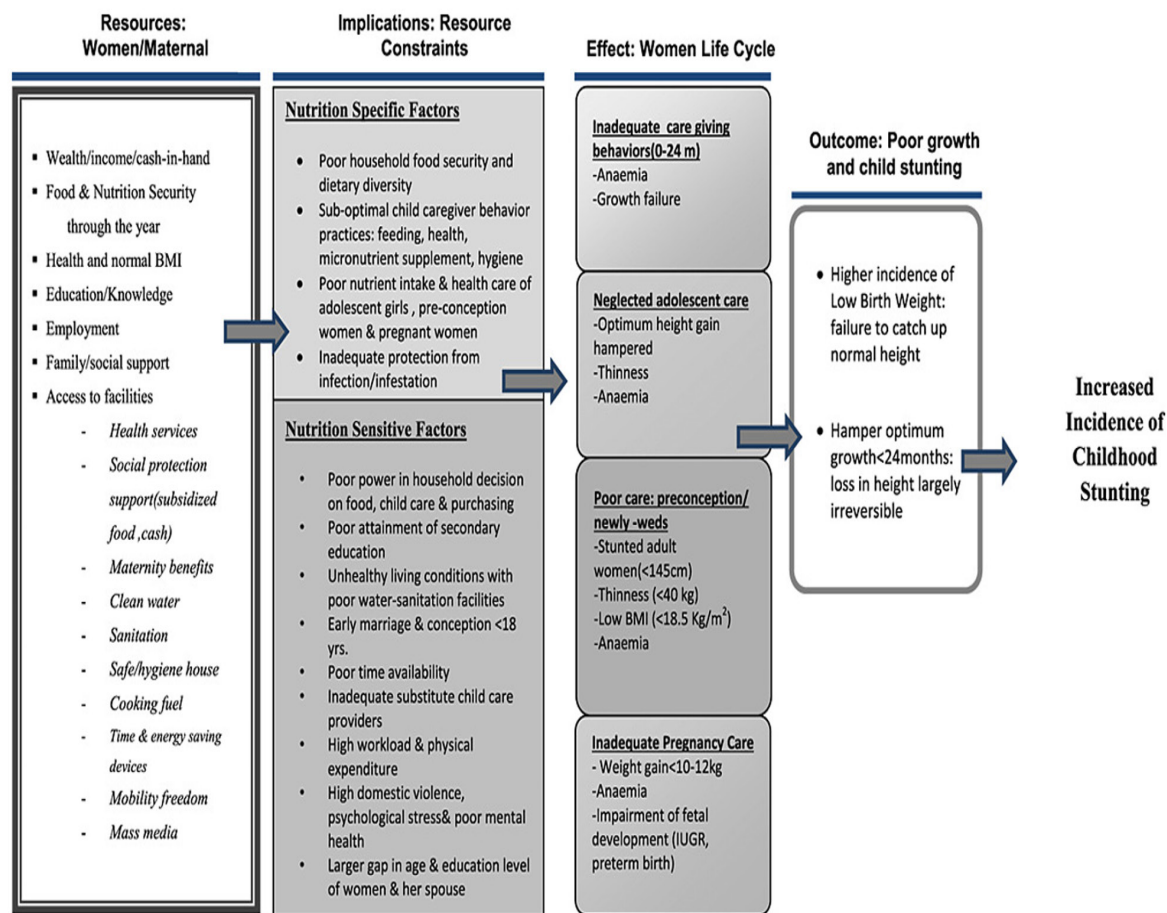


Figure 1. Improving women's nutrition imperative for rapid reduction of childhood stunting in South Asia: coupling of nutrition-specific interventions with nutrition-sensitive measures essential (Vir, 2016)

Table 2. Summarization of the midwives and nurses to reduce the stunting situation in ASEAN

Challenges Faced by Midwives and Nurses	Role of Midwives in Preventing Stunting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited resources and training on updated nutrition practices (WHO, 2021). - Labor shortage in underprivileged areas (UNICEF, 2020). - Cultural and societal barriers. - Misunderstandings of nutrition and breastfeeding concepts (Victora et al., 2016). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Antenatal Care (ANC) and Maternal Nutrition: Providing folic acid and iron (Bhutta et al., 2013; Bhutta et al., 2021), maternal nutrition education, culturally sensitive counseling, and community movement. - Maternal Education and Counseling: Educating the balanced diets, breastfeeding, and complementary feeding practices (Victora et al., 2016), and family member involvement. - Knowledge and Safe Delivery Practices (Lassi et al., 2019). - Breastfeeding Promotion (WHO, 2022).
Role of Nurses in Combating Stunting	Apply in Nursing Education for Nursing Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growth Monitoring and Early Detection (UNICEF, 2020). - Nutritional Counseling and Support (Bhutta et al., 2013). - Immunization and Disease Prevention (Lassi et al., 2019). - Community Outreach and Health Promotion (Black et al., 2013). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum Improvement: Educational program development of maternal and child nutrition, growth monitoring, stunting early detection (Lassi et al., 2019). - Clinical Training and Internships: Enhancing stunting managements in real experiences (Black et al., 2013). - Reducing Stunting interdisciplinary collaboration (Bhutta et al., 2013). - Community-based health promotion programs (UNICEF, 2020). - Encouraged evidence-based practice implementation (WHO, 2023). -Enhancing empowerment and social movement performance.

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