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'Hidden Hunger Index' Identifies Global Hot Spots of Micronutrient Deficiencies for First Time
New Findings Can Guide Implementation of Recent Lancet Series' Recommendations to Advance Development through Improved Nutrition

BASEL, SWITZERLAND—A first-of-its-kind global map and indices of micronutrient deficiencies—a public health problem that affects two billion people worldwide and seriously hinders economic development—found that hidden hunger hot spots are in sub-Saharan Africa, India and Afghanistan, and are severe in many countries in South-Central/South-East Asia. Published this week in the journal *PLOS ONE* and developed by humanitarian nutrition think tank, *Sight and Life*, these 'Hidden Hunger Index' maps and rankings offer the health and development community an evidence-based tool to target the alleviation of multiple micronutrient deficiencies, which is critical to achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals.

"Hidden hunger, a chronic lack of micronutrients, robs individuals of their potential by negatively—and permanently—affecting their physical and mental development. To tackle this grave problem, we need to know where the burden is highest. Now, for the first time, we do. My hope is that this new Hidden Hunger Index will serve as a useful advocacy tool in policy decisions to spur the scale-up of proven nutrition interventions like food fortification and multiple micronutrient supplementation," said Klaus Kraemer, Ph.D., director of *Sight and Life* and corresponding author of the paper, "The Global Hidden Hunger Indices and Maps: An Advocacy Tool for Action."

Hidden hunger accounts for approximately seven percent of the global disease burden. Iron deficiency anemia, zinc and vitamin A deficiencies rank among the 15 leading causes of disease burden, costing 180 billion USD annually. The Hidden Hunger Index maps, for the first time, show the combined prevalence in preschool children of multiple micronutrient deficiencies: vitamin A, zinc and iron, as well as iodine.

The paper found that there were global hot spots of hidden hunger, with the prevalence alarmingly high in sub-Saharan Africa as well as India and Afghanistan, and severe in many countries in South-Central/South-East Asia. For children in most of the 20 countries with the highest Hidden Hunger Index scores, more than 40 percent were estimated to be stunted/zinc-deficient, 30 percent were anemic due to iron deficiency and half were vitamin A deficient. In 36 countries, home to 90 percent of the world's



stunted children, micronutrient deficiencies, especially vitamin A and zinc, were responsible for up to 12 percent of the total number of life years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death.

Co-author Robert E. Black, MD, who was also the lead author for the recently published *Lancet* Maternal and Child Nutrition Series, added, "The *Lancet* Series called for better data on micronutrient deficiencies at the national level to guide intervention programs in countries and priorities for support globally. By highlighting hidden hunger hot spots, these Hidden Hunger Index maps and rankings help address this unmet need, and are critical to helping countries and partners prioritize where to implement crucial nutrition solutions."

Sight and Life developed the Hidden Hunger Index with the input of high-level scientists, academics and decision makers from a range of global institutions, including UN agencies, U.S. government agencies, universities and international NGOs.

The full paper with maps and indices can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/hiddenhunger13>.

About *Sight and Life*

Sight and Life is a nutrition think tank and humanitarian initiative of DSM that cares about the world's most vulnerable populations, and exists to help improve their nutritional status. *Sight and Life* promotes research, shares best practices and mobilizes support for the world's undernourished. *Sight and Life* and DSM are currently leading *Vitamins in Motion*, an initiative to advance worldwide health and economic development through increased access to the essential vitamins all people need to be healthy and well-nourished.

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