

# Malnutrition prevalence still high

**By Correspondent  
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DESPITE substantial efforts made by the government to improve nutritional status, malnutrition amongst children remains a national challenge as statistics show that it has slightly decreased by only 2 percent in five years.

Permanent secretary, Prime Minister's Office, Florens Turuka who is also a Chairman of the High Level Steering Committee on Nutrition said millions of children are still suffering from stunting, underweight, anaemia, vitamin A and iodine deficiency.

He said in a period of 5 years – from 2005 to 2010 the rate of malnutrition went down by only 2 percent, from 44 to 42 percent.

The official was speaking in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday at the official opening of the first Tanzania's multi-sectoral nutrition review meeting.

"This problem is not only facing poor people as many people think but also the well-to-do families. The problem is not just poverty.... but how to prepare food with all the necessary nutrients matters," he said. "The prevalence of overweight among women in reproductive age (18-50) is estimated at 23 percent and the prevalence of obesity is at

6 percent. In Dar es Salaam alone, 28 percent of women aged 15-49 were found to be overweight and 16 percent with obesity," noted the PS.

He explained that being overweight and obese significantly increase the risk of diet related non-communicable diseases including diabetes, high blood pressure and heart diseases. The official therefore called upon the people to cultivate a habit of eating healthy.

He said the meeting will provide a forum that proposes appropriate ways that will ensure alignment of the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) and all nutrition stakeholders with the

national nutrition strategy in order to accelerate improvement of nutrition matters in the country.

For her part, Highland ambassador, Fionnuala Gilsenan called upon men to help their wives in social activities so that women can concentrate on feeding their children properly.

Meanwhile Coordinator of the School Health Project, Sixbert Eustad has said that a total of 190 school children out of 1,635 in Bukoba, Missenyi and Karagwe Districts in Kagera Region are underweight due to various reasons, including going to school on an empty stomach.