

Call to implement nutrition roadmap

Aid organisations World Vision and Save the Children are calling for political promises to be urgently translated into action to avert the deaths of millions of undernourished children around the world.



The call for action is included in a report called the '[Nutrition Barometer](#)' which the two agencies are launching next week at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The Nutrition Barometer is an accountability tool that provides a snapshot of national governments' commitments and progress in addressing child undernutrition.

The report ranks the 36 countries that are home to 90% of the world's undernourished children, of which South Africa is one, despite its status as a middle-income country.

In fact, South Africa received mixed results on the Nutrition Barometer. The report ranked the country as having relatively weak or 'emerging' political commitments and investments in nutrition - along with countries such as Iraq and Egypt - but classified its nutrition progress as 'sound'.

"We welcome the South African government's recent efforts to put nutrition higher up on their agenda," says Debbie Farnaby, CEO of Save the Children South Africa. "The latest roadmap 2012-2014 for nutrition is an excellent planning document, and it is heartening to see that so many players are working together to see the plan through to implementation."

Both aid organisations, however, recommend that, as an urgent next step, the nutrition roadmap agreed by the South African government this year is implemented, and clear metrics are put in place to measure performance against the implementation plan. Metrics - or measures of financial performance - are a critical tool for both government and civil society to track the impact of nutrition interventions, especially for children.

Although the Nutrition Barometer classifies South Africa's nutrition progress as 'sound', the classification is merely relative to the progress in the other 36 countries in the world, which together, are home to 90% of the world's undernourished children. Additionally, South Africa continues to be off-track for meeting the UN Development Goal (MDG) 4 of reducing child mortality by two thirds.

"Too many South African children are going hungry. As the strongest economy on the continent, we should aim to get off the list of countries carrying the highest burden for malnutrition as soon as possible," says World Vision's chief executive Kev Jenkins. "This demands not just political promises, but also strong nutrition strategies backed by sustained, long-term investments, in order for every child to have the best start to life," he says.