Malnutrition prevalence

Definition
The percentage of children under the age of five that are moderately or severely underweight and/or suffer from wasting and stunting.

Measurement
The percentage of population under five years old.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its State of the World's Children report publishes statistical tables about child nutrition. UNICEF uses three major indicators: **Underweight** (moderate and severe): moderate is below minus two standard deviations from median weight for age of reference population; severe is below minus three standard deviations from median weight for age of reference population. **Wasting** (moderate and severe): below minus two standard deviations from median weight for height of reference population. **Stunting** (moderate and severe): below minus two standard deviations from median height for age of reference population.

Rationale
Malnutrition prevalence measures the nutritional status of children under five years old, which is a reflection of the social, economic and environmental influences that impinge on children's lives. Hence, it is a good overall indicator of how development affects children because, for example, food scarcity can be related to many causes such as poverty, natural disasters, conflicts, etc. Sometimes these factors are not isolated, but together they contribute to child malnutrition.

Notations
National health authorities of the developing countries have insufficient data and lack the capacity and willingness to collect and report information. Hence the World Health Organization (WHO) prepares many estimates in accordance with epidemiological and statistical standards.

Gender disaggregation
Available.

Frequency
Annual (according to countries survey).

Spatial resolution

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Availability/time lag
Two years.
Primary data holder
World Health Organization (WHO),  http://www.who.int/nut/

Secondary data holders
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),  
- World Health Organization (WHO),  http://www.who.int/nut/
- World Resources Institute (WRI),  http://www.wri.org/

Data set use

Data release policy

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