



Update on the nutrition situation in the Asia–Pacific region

Mike Toole

Burnet Institute, VIC

In low- and middle-income countries, undernutrition is associated with between one-third and half of child deaths globally. Of those children that survive undernutrition, more than a quarter—or 165 million children—are stunted (low height-for-age). This has long-term negative consequences affecting educational outcomes and employment opportunities.

While the highest rates of stunting are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, some countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific have very high rates, including Timor-Leste (50%), Papua New Guinea (44%), Cambodia (41%), Indonesia (39%), Myanmar (35%) and Solomon Islands (33%).

While health concerns often focus on overweight and obesity among adults in the Pacific region, child stunting rates in 2013 were the highest in the world (39 per cent). This highlights the challenge of addressing the *double burden* of over- and under-nutrition in a region where adult female overweight prevalence exceeds 90% in some countries, such as Tonga and Nauru.