

# Nutrition in the First 1,000 Days

## “State of the World’s Mothers 2012” Report from



### Interpreting and Discussing the Report:

#### Information, Reflection Questions and Service Project Ideas for Children in Grades K-5



Since the “State of the World’s Mothers” (SOWM) report is written for an adult audience, share the following key observations from the data. Discuss the findings of the report using the reflection questions and teacher directions for grades K-2 and 3-5. Then see below the ideas for service projects related to the world’s mothers and children.

#### Key Observations to Share with K-2 Children:

Every year an organization called Save the Children publishes a report that tells about countries around the world that are performing the best and worst in supporting mothers. This report doesn’t look at whether children are well behaved or whether moms have washing machines or vacuums to make their work easier. The report looks at what moms really care about: Do their children have enough food and clean water to drink? Do their children have the opportunity to go to school? Can they take their children to a doctor if they need care? (Display the 2012 Mother’s Day index, following page 52 of the Report, with all of the ranked countries.)

This year, the report tells about where in the world mothers and children don’t get the right kinds of foods in the earliest months of life. Getting good nutrition while your mom is pregnant and in the first two years of your life gives you the start you need to be smart and healthy.

You might be surprised that the United States was not ranked in the top ten best places to be a mom. Norway, Iceland, and Sweden ranked the best places (identify these countries on a globe.) Many of the countries ranked the lowest are very poor and are on the continents of Africa and Asia—Niger ranks last on the list of good places to be a mom (locate these continents on the globe and then point out Niger). In these countries it is much harder and sometimes impossible for moms to provide what they need or want for their children.

For instance, in Somalia, which is ranked last in child well-being, 1 out of 6 children dies before age five. In Somalia, 1 out of every 3 children is malnourished and 70 percent lack access to safe water. Fewer than one-third are enrolled in school, and more than twice as many boys as girls are enrolled.

**Reflection questions:**

1. Why does it make sense to look at how children are treated around the world on Mother's Day?
2. Why is it important for moms to have good nutrition when they are pregnant?
3. How would your mom feel if you were hungry and sick because you didn't have enough food or healthy food and drinking water?
4. The report says that children who don't get the right nutrition before they are two can be hurt for life. Why is it important for every child in the world to have a good start?
5. Who do you think can help mothers and children in countries like Niger get food and safe water? (Is it the responsibility of the government, businesses, charities, churches, or families?) How can it help to tell other people about the needs in Somalia (or another country from the index)? Who can you tell? How? What other ways can you think of to help?
6. Why is it important for all children to go to school? How does education help people have a better life and better nutrition?

**Background to Share with Grades 3-5**

The Save the Children 2012 Mothers' Day Index ranks countries around the world on the traits that support mothers and children. The index lists 165 countries in three tiers: Most Developed Countries, Less Developed Countries, and Least Developed Countries.

The index tells you that Norway is ranked as the Number 1 country to be a mother, meaning mothers will probably live a long life and babies will live past their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Several factors are used to determine the ranking. The following opportunities for women and children support a higher ranking on the index:

- Childbirth takes place at a hospital or with a nurse, midwife (a person who is trained to help moms give birth) or doctor
- Women are valued and equal members of society
- Access to a good education
- Safe drinking water
- Sufficient and nutritious food
- Access to medicines and caregivers for mothers and babies

**Reflection Questions:**

1. Why does the report focus on the first 1,000 days? When children start their lives malnourished, the negative effects are largely irreversible. How many years and months make up 1,000 days?
2. Look at the charts for the Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III countries. The United States is a developed country (Tier I). What does it mean to live in a "developed country"?
3. What do you think it means to live in a "less developed" or "least developed country"?
4. Find the United States on the Tier I list. What does the data show are some of the reasons the United States is ranked where it is?
5. What countries are ranked the lowest on the Tier III list?

6. What does the data show are some of the reasons Niger is ranked as the worst place to be a mother?
7. Why do you think more boys than girls go to school in some of the Tier III countries? How do you think this affects families?
8. How many years do children in your country go to school? Who in your country thinks it is important for you to go to school? (Is it important to government, businesses, charities and churches, and/or families?) How can you tell it is important to them? How do other countries show that education is (or is not) important?
9. Locate the five most developed countries and the five least developed countries on a world map.

### **Service Project Ideas:**

1. Hold a collection drive for food or other materials like baby formula, diapers, or baby clothes, and donate the items to a local food pantry or to an organization that helps mothers and children locally.
2. Meet with the person in charge of your school food program to learn how much extra food is left from school meals and what is done with it. Design a plan to bring that extra food to a soup kitchen, shelter or other place that serves children in need.
3. Identify a group of children in need in your local community (e.g., children may be in a shelter, hospital, or another difficult situation). Identify their needs, then collect and/or make necessary items for the children. Put the collected items in bags or backpacks and deliver to the children or organization.
4. Draw a picture and/or write a story about mothers in Somalia. Share your work with your families and the community. Ask them to support organizations that help children in need like Save the Children.
5. There may be other people in the lives of youth who take on the role of mother in some ways. These may be aunts, teachers, grandparents, or neighbors. Write a letter to someone who acts like your "other mother." Tell that person what she (or he) has done to support you and how you feel about it. Send the letter to share your thanks.
6. Safe water is essential to good health. Many developing countries have inadequate access to clean water. Conduct research to find organizations that help dig wells and improve sanitation in developing countries. Find out what they need and how you can help mothers around the world get access to clean water for drinking and cleaning. This may include a fundraiser or penny drive.