

Economic growth will not feed the hungry, say researchers

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(Medical Xpress)—New research on India's rural poor has revealed that the country's impressive economic growth has not made a significant dent in its low levels of adult and child nutrition.

The team from the Universities of Manchester, Delhi, Cape Coast and Arkansas say the large sector of the economy relying on low wages and physically demanding work hinders improvement in nutrition across rural areas.

Policies which empower women through better education and employment opportunities are key to reduce the number of undernourished children they add.

Dr Katsushi Imai, Senior Lecturer from The University of Manchester, says increasing the productivity of farmers, fishermen, labourers and production workers reliant on manual labour, has had little impact on nutritional status.

The study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, draws upon large nation-wide micro data on [Body Mass Index](#) and other nutritional data collected in India from 1992, 1998 and 2005.

He said: "In India, adult [nutritional status](#) measured by BMI has improved since 1982, but the pace has been sluggish.

"On [child malnutrition](#), the situation is far worse: India has one of the

worst levels of [low birth weight](#), underweight and wasting among children in Asia despite its status as a major [economic power](#).

"Our research has shown that these problems cannot be resolved alone by increasing productivity and economic growth.

He added: "For adults it's the type of employment which tends to result in these lower BMI figures.

"Unemployment, low pay and reliance on physically demanding work are to blame- and increasing productivity in these sectors changes little.

"But creating more professionals and managers is far from an easy option for a majority of the poor as they lack skills and education and cannot overcome structural barriers that are so pervasive.

"Extensive provision of health insurance and better infrastructure are also likely to reduce the temporary nutritional deprivation of children.

More information: www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/2012-12-economic-growth-hungry.html

Provided by University of Manchester

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