UNICEF is supporting the Government of Indonesia to improve the enabling environment for nutrition, and to strengthen systems for the delivery of nutrition services.

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Promoting public awareness and solutions to address overweight and obesity

In Indonesia, one in three adults, one in five children aged 5 to 12 years, and one in seven adolescents aged 13 to 18 years are overweight or obese. Despite this, there are no specific targets for childhood overweight and obesity in the national medium-term development plan, an area the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is working on. Astrid Citra Padmita, national UN Volunteer Overweight Prevention Specialist, is part of the UNICEF team raising awareness on addressing overweight and obesity.

Across the globe, there is an increasing trend in overweight and obesity among children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 years. According to estimates of the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 340 million or almost 18 per cent of this age group were overweight or obese in 2016, compared to four per cent in 1975.

Overweight and obesity can be attributed to several risk factors. These include individual factors, such as the lack of physical activity, high consumption of unhealthy foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar like sugar-sweetened beverages, confectionery and low consumption of healthy foods, like fruits and vegetables. This is compounded by
environmental and economic factors, such as lack of access to safe drinking water, high exposure to unhealthy food and beverage advertisement, fast food and modern retailing growth and poor active mobility infrastructure. There are visible gaps in policy and legislation.

In light of this situation, the assignment of Astrid Citra Padmita with UNICEF in Indonesia focuses on policy advocacy, coordination and public awareness raising, as well as evidence generation and dissemination.

A volunteer since March 2021, Astrid has taken the lead in public awareness activities, such as coordinating with international and national vendors to adopt UNICEF public service announcement videos about food environment policy on sugar-sweetened beverage taxation, front-of-pack nutritional labeling and unhealthy food marketing. She has also been liaising with the Digital Team of UNICEF’s Communication Section in Indonesia on launching these videos.

At the start of Astrid’s assignment, she conducted a landscape analysis of overweight and obesity in Indonesia, using tools and guidance from UNICEF headquarters. This was a new thing for her at the time, she reports, "but I learnt a lot in the process, from gathering data and information through desk reviews and focus group discussions with both government and non-government partners to arranging the two-day validation workshop that involved multi-stakeholders."

Astrid is an excellent colleague to work with, and a key part of the Nutrition team. In addition to having a solid technical background in nutrition, thanks to her studies and advanced degree in this area, she has been playing an active role in developing and maintaining relationships with many government and non-government partners to support UNICEF’s new area of work on overweight prevention. —David Colozza, Nutrition Specialist with UNICEF and Astrid’s supervisor

Among the public awareness-raising activities that Astrid handled this year are National Nutrition Day on 25 January and World Obesity Day on 4 March. On National Nutrition Day, she, along with others, raised community awareness of stunting and obesity, arranging an Instagram Live event involving two public figures, a medical doctor and an actress.

I am grateful that I can learn from my day-to-day work, colleagues and external partners, as well as from the capacity-building training provided...
by both UNV and UNICEF. What makes me more grateful to be serving as a volunteer is that I can be part of the change, where my current actions can make a positive impact on my community in the future,” a hopeful Astrid asserts enthusiastically.

On World Obesity Day, Astrid arranged several activities, coordinating with colleagues and vendors to produce a one-minute PSA video. She and her team also cooperated with the Alliance of Independent Journalists of Indonesia, Mitra Muda, the Ministry of Health and the Centre for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives in conducting an online webinar titled: Obesity in Indonesia: Why we should be aware.

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https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/nutrition

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