

Nutrition Sector Update

OCTOBER 2013

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to prevent and treat acute malnutrition. USAID/OFDA-supported programs are community-based, linked to local health systems, and use evidence-based approaches that decrease morbidity and mortality resulting from malnutrition. In addition to supporting infant and young child feeding (IYCF) programs, USAID/OFDA funds nutrition education, initiatives aimed at improving nutrition systems, and operational research to advance best practices and build local capacity to treat acute malnutrition. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$52.8 million to support nutrition activities, including nearly \$49.6 million for nutrition interventions in 18 countries and more than \$3.2 million for global and regional nutrition initiatives.

IMPROVING THE GLOBAL INTERAGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITY



Child eating Plumpy'nut, a high-nutrient food used to treat acute malnutrition.

(Photo by Kimberly Flowers/USAID)

During the past decade, the number and severity of droughts and food security disasters has continued to rise, with an average of 24 disasters affecting at least 930,000 people per year. Conducting reliable surveys is essential to assess the severity of a crisis and tailor the response to meet the needs of affected populations. With nearly \$450,000 in USAID/OFDA assistance, Action Against Hunger/United States (AAH/USA) manages Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART)—an interagency initiative and methodology specifically designed to collect reliable and accurate nutrition and mortality data. By raising awareness of SMART and increasing nutrition assessment coordination and partnership building among the humanitarian community, AAH/USA enables donors, non-governmental organizations, and host governments to make informed decisions regarding emergency nutrition assistance.

SMART methodology has become the standard reference tool among the Nutrition Cluster—the coordinating body for nutrition activities—not only to collect nutrition assessment data during emergencies but also to prevent and prepare for nutrition-related emergencies before they occur. By collecting data prior to and following crises, host governments and humanitarian agencies are better positioned to help communities foster households that are more resilient to climate-related disasters and food insecurity, ultimately saving lives and reducing human suffering.

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE THROUGH EMERGENCY NUTRITION NETWORK

A lack of institutional memory and insufficient lessons-learned in the emergency nutrition sector precipitated the creation of the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN) in 1996. Ongoing USAID/OFDA support has enabled ENN to sustain its core activities, as well as expand programming to respond to nutrition sector information needs. In FY 2013, USAID/OFDA provided ENN with \$700,000 in support to strengthen interagency understanding of nutrition and food security disaster risk

reduction and emergency response among humanitarian actors through a combination of research, knowledge management, and information dissemination through humanitarian publications.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE MALNUTRITION

In Yemen, insecurity and protracted displacement have exacerbated high levels of poverty and have left millions of people food insecure. According to the 2013 U.N. Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen, nearly 1 million children under five years of age are experiencing acute malnutrition, including an estimated 255,000 children experiencing severe acute malnutrition. Nationwide, only 12 percent of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed, and undernutrition results in approximately one-third of all deaths of children under five years of age, according to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF).

USAID/OFDA partners in Yemen are working to improve nutrition levels through a variety of interventions. With \$3.3 million in USAID/OFDA support, UNICEF is working to increase access to preventative nutrition programs and malnutrition treatment services by building local capacity to administer community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) activities, including facilitating community-level malnutrition screening and referral of severe malnutrition cases. UNICEF is also coordinating with doctors, nurses, and community health care volunteers to integrate CMAM and IYCF activities and to ensure the availability of nutrition and IYCF supplies. With approximately \$1.1 million in FY 2013 USAID/OFDA support, Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US) is promoting IYCF practices by training community health care volunteers to counsel mothers regarding breastfeeding and complimentary feeding practices. In addition, SC/US is implementing a targeted supplementary feeding program, providing nutrition screening and nutritious food supplements to children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating women.

INTEGRATING THERAPEUTIC NUTRITIONAL SERVICES



A health worker measures a child's mid-upper arm circumference to screen for malnutrition in Warrap State, South Sudan. (Photo by Ron Tong/USAID)

Cyclical droughts, flooding, poor harvests, environmental degradation, and displacement, as well as disruption of trade and high food prices due to ongoing conflict have resulted in food insecurity and elevated malnutrition rates across South Sudan. In 2013, nearly 123,000 children under the age of five have experienced severe acute malnutrition and nearly 268,000 have experienced moderate acute malnutrition, according to UNICEF. With \$600,000 in USAID/OFDA funding, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is supporting emergency nutrition programs to treat moderate acute malnutrition and severe acute malnutrition among displaced and conflict-affected populations across South Sudan and in Abyei Area. Based on needs assessments, IOM is integrating inpatient and outpatient nutrition interventions, such as CMAM, into existing health care systems where possible and is providing nutrition training to

community health care workers and beneficiaries. IOM is also helping prevent worsening malnutrition conditions in vulnerable populations through targeted and blanket supplementary feeding programs.

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