



Fortified for Life

How the U.S. Government Supports Global Nutrition

Why is Nutrition so Important?

Good nutrition is a critical part of ensuring that all human beings can use their bodies and minds to live an active life and reach their full potential. Good nutrition during the 1,000 days from a woman's pregnancy to her child's second birthday is crucial to ensuring the child's health, physical growth, and brain development. Assisting mothers and children with nutrition must be accompanied by good bodily and household care practices, clean environments, and access to health services.

A great deal of progress has been made globally in reducing malnutrition, but there is still a long way to go. We need to accelerate progress on maternal and child nutrition to ensure that all women and children are able to live dignified, healthy lives. Nearly half of all preventable child deaths are linked to malnutrition¹, and in 2017, 151 million children were physically stunted, a consequence of chronic malnutrition.² Early childhood malnutrition also stunts a child's future, limiting his or her ability to grow, learn, earn a living, become self-sufficient, and move out of poverty, due to malnutrition's harmful effects on cognitive growth as well. Children suffering from poor nutrition are more vulnerable to illnesses in their early years and into adulthood. Expectant mothers who are malnourished are at higher risk of bearing malnourished children, perpetuating an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.

Given the relationship between nutrition and a child's health and



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World



Experts in economics agree that fighting malnutrition should be the top priority for policy makers and philanthropists.*

*Copenhagen Consensus, 2012

learning abilities, there are economic impacts as well as health impacts. Studies have shown that improved nutrition can increase a person's lifetime earnings by 46 percent.³ Scaling up nutrition assistance can boost a country's GDP by 11 percent each year⁴, and research shows that every dollar invested in nutrition generates as much as \$166 in benefits related to better health and productivity.⁵

As one of the largest donors to global maternal and child health programs, the U.S. has long led the international community in efforts to improve child survival. Through

(continues on next page)

the 1,000 Days Partnership, the U.S. has helped raise awareness about the devastating impact of malnutrition and mobilized support for the global Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all nations in September 2015 aim to end hunger, malnutrition, and preventable child deaths by 2030. To help achieve these ambitious and transformative goals, the U.S. must demonstrate continued leadership in improving global nutrition.

U.S. Government Funding for Nutrition

The funding for nutrition within the U.S. government's Global Health Programs provides life-saving nutrition assistance to women and children around the world. Nutrition assistance can take many forms, from education and behavior-change programs to providing specific foods and health care and managing cases of acute malnutrition. Examples of nutrition assistance:

- Education and guidance for mothers on early and exclusive breastfeeding
- Supplementing and fortifying food with micronutrients, including vitamin A, iron, folic acid, calcium, and iodine
- Nutrition counseling for mothers and families and support groups, such as mothers' groups and care groups
- Management, in places such as health clinics, of acute malnutrition using food rations and therapeutic foods, which provide the necessary protein, energy, fat, vitamins, and minerals for survival

Congressional funding for global nutrition programs has seen modest increases over the last few years, from \$95 million in fiscal year 2013 to \$125 million in FY 2018. However, this funding is low compared to the

need, and given the enormous impact that nutrition has on the health and economic growth of entire nations. Nutrition represents only 4 percent of the total global health spending through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and USAID's global health spending is less than a tenth of a percent of the whole federal budget.

In 2016 the World Bank, Results for Development Institute, and 1,000 Days released data showing that it will cost approximately \$70 billion by 2025 to reach our intermediate goals for reducing malnutrition.⁶ Reaching the global targets for nutrition will require commitment from both countries and donors. Increased funding and effective policies would be an investment in the health, well-being, and economic security of many countries.

The world has agreed to work toward a goal of ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The U.S. plays a critical role in achieving these goals along with other donors and national governments. Alongside other investments in agriculture, health, water and sanitation, and economic development, ending malnutrition is possible by 2030. The U.S. government must do its part to improve nutrition and health among mothers and children.



Joseph Molieri for Bread for the World

Endnotes

¹ Black RE, Victora CG, Walker SP, et al. (2013). Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. *The Lancet* 382 (9890): 396.

² UNICEF/WHO/World Bank (2018). Joint child malnutrition estimates - Levels and trends (2018 edition). Accessed at <http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates2017/en/>

³ Hoddinott J, Maluccio J, Behrman J, et al. (2008). Effect of a nutrition intervention during early childhood on economic productivity in Guatemalan adults. *The Lancet* 371 (9610): 411-416.

⁴ Horton S and RH Steckel. (2013). Malnutrition: Global Economic Losses

Attributable to Malnutrition 1900-2000 and Projects to 2050. In *How Much Have Global Problems Cost the Earth? A scorecard from 1900 to 2050*, edited by B. Lomborg, 247-272. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Hoddinott J S Horton. (2014). Perspective Paper: Benefits and Costs of the Food Security and Nutrition Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Copenhagen Consensus 2014. Accessed at www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-food-security-and-nutrition-perspective-horton-hoddinott.

⁶ Shekar M, et al. (2017). An Investment Framework for Nutrition: Reaching the Global Targets for Stunting, Anemia Breastfeeding, and Wasting. World Bank: Washington, DC.