

Nutrition

USAID Global Health



Not getting enough to eat and not getting nourishing food can kill. Malnutrition is one of the biggest contributors to child mortality around the world. Roughly half of the 852 million chronically hungry people in today's world are children. About 3.5 million of these children die each year. Many of these deaths could have been prevented through such simple activities as breastfeeding, fortification of food with vitamins and minerals, and the addition of zinc to diarrhea treatment. The impacts of

malnutrition in the first two years of life cannot be reversed. Undernourished children who survive grow up impaired by worse health and lower educational and productivity capabilities.

Since good nutrition can save lives and protect against infectious disease, USAID supports efforts to combat malnutrition and hunger in vulnerable populations. Annually, the Agency invests about \$30 million in nutrition programs. USAID concentrates on six main areas: micronutrient supplementation and fortification, improved infant and young child feeding, and measures to improve household food supplies and security. Additionally, USAID supports community-based approaches to monitoring and improving children's nutritional health, as well as expanding research into supplementation and the development and dissemination of biofortified crops.

More than 50 countries have received USAID assistance to establish vitamin (especially Vitamin A) programs. The Agency and its partners helped increase global Vitamin A coverage in children, aged 6 to 59 months, and support programs in 19 countries around the world that fortify staple foods with iron, iodine, Vitamin A, and other micronutrients. The cost of food fortification can be as low as a few cents per individual per year for adding iodine to salt, and up to 25 cents for adding more complex vitamins and minerals.

The United States is the largest food aid donor in the world. Annually, it procures, ships, stores, distributes, monitors, and evaluates about 2.5 metric tons of food, which is worth more than \$1 billion. The Agency addresses not only the quality of diets for vulnerable groups, but also works to improve the access, availability, and utilization of foods. For more than 30 years, USAID has supported programs that help prevent malnutrition, improve the health of millions, and lessen death rates.

March 2009

Web site

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/nut/index.html

E-mail queries

GHCommunicationsTeam@usaid.gov