

# NUTRITION SECTOR UPDATE



A USAID/OFDA-supported outreach site in Turkana County, Kenya, where nutrition actors identified pockets of malnutrition twice the WHO emergency threshold in June 2017. In response, USAID/OFDA partner SC/US is providing therapeutic foods to malnourished children and essential medical services to families. *Photo by Rob Friedman/USAID*

## Providing Rapid Technical Support to Nutritional Emergencies

In many humanitarian crises, the need for technical nutrition support exceeds the available expertise or capacity within responding organizations. To address this common response challenge, USAID/OFDA supported the International Medical Corps (IMC) with \$500,000 in FY 2017 funds to manage a global Technical Rapid Response Team (Tech RRT) comprising four nutrition advisors available to deploy to support various crisis responses around the world.

IMC's Tech RRT nutrition advisors possess expert and cutting-edge knowledge of approaches to both prevent and treat malnutrition, including as related to IYCF-E, management of acute malnutrition, social and behavior change communication (SBCC), and nutrition assessment methodologies. With this knowledge, the nutrition advisors are well-placed to advise implementing partners on the best, context-appropriate approach for nutrition interventions, strategy development, and staff training or selection.

The Tech RRT advisors are available for deployments of up to two months and are based in strategic hubs located in close proximity to regions vulnerable to humanitarian crisis or where emergencies are ongoing.

To date, Tech RRT advisors have supported numerous technical deployments to support nutrition responses in Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

## Sector Overview

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is a leader in supporting emergency nutrition response in international humanitarian crises. According to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), malnutrition resulting from disease and food insecurity is rampant among displaced populations. In particular, a disproportionate number of children in emergencies face severe acute malnutrition (SAM), a life-threatening condition defined by very low weight-for-height and high risk of mortality.

USAID/OFDA supports community-based programs that combine the strengths of clinical and home-based care to address nutritional deficiencies. USAID/OFDA partners aim to build awareness and capacity to prevent and treat malnutrition through community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) programs, infant and young child feeding in emergencies (IYCF-E) interventions, and the collection of nutrition data to better inform response efforts.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$124 million to support nutrition activities, including global and regional nutrition initiatives and nutrition interventions in more than 20 countries.



A USAID NGO partner manages a nutrition site in South Sudan. *Photo by Meghann Perez/USAID*

## Developing Breastfeeding Support Interventions for Women in Emergencies to Improve Infant Nutrition

Breastfeeding is the most effective method of feeding a newborn child for the first six months of life; however, many women in humanitarian crises report difficulties maintaining breastfeeding or a supply of milk due to illness, trauma, or displacement. Historically, humanitarian actors have launched few large-scale attempts to support women in crises to relactate or resume breastfeeding.

Through prior year funding, USAID/OFDA continued to support Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US) in FY 2017 to design an improved protocol to help women relactate and provide their infants with optimal nourishment in crises. The protocol includes medical support to stimulate milk production, as well as counseling and psychosocial support to help mothers overcome remaining barriers to lactation and engaging in breastfeeding. SC/US plans to pilot the finalized protocol in Zimbabwe prior to wider dissemination for use by relief organizations responding to crises worldwide.

## Responding to Life-Threatening Malnutrition in Yemen

With nearly \$10.2 million in FY 2017 funding, USAID/OFDA partner the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is responding to nutrition needs in Yemen through the provision of an integrated package of curative and preventative health and nutrition interventions targeting children younger than five years of age and pregnant and lactating women. UNICEF is delivering life-saving nutrition support—including treatment supplies, CMAM training for health workers, IYCF-E training for community health volunteers, and the implementation of nutrition surveys—through nutrition facilities, community outreach activities, and eight mobile teams composed of nutrition professionals. In addition, through more than \$11.3 million in FY 2017 funding, USAID/OFDA supported seven non-governmental organization (NGO) partners to conduct life-saving interventions to prevent and treat malnutrition in Yemen.

## Treating and Preventing Malnutrition in Drought-Affected Kenya

With nearly \$6.8 million in FY 2017 funding, USAID/OFDA supported seven implementing partners—including one UN agency and six non-governmental organizations—to conduct nutrition interventions in response to the effects of drought and increased food insecurity and malnutrition in affected parts of Kenya.

For example, with more than \$1.5 million in FY 2017 USAID/OFDA assistance, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is responding to the effects of drought and deteriorating food security and nutrition conditions in Kenya's Turkana County by preventing and treating malnutrition to improve the nutritional status of children younger than five years of age and pregnant and lactating women. IRC assistance includes the management of SAM and moderate acute malnutrition, as well as IYCF-E and SBCC.

With more than \$400,000 in FY 2017 funds, USAID/OFDA is also supporting World Vision to identify, treat, and manage malnutrition among children younger than five years of age and pregnant and lactating women in Kenya's Kilifi County. World Vision interventions include nutrition screening, outreach by community health workers to identify active malnutrition cases and refer them for treatment, and supervision of nutrition stabilization centers.

## Strengthening Health Systems to Prepare For and Respond to Spikes in SAM

USAID/OFDA supports Concern Worldwide with more than \$620,000 in FY 2017 funding to strengthen host country health systems' capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to periodic surges in SAM. With USAID/OFDA support, Concern Worldwide is piloting a model to equip health facility staff to monitor nutrition-related data, anticipate spikes in SAM due to deteriorating food insecurity and disease outbreaks, and set thresholds for specific response actions, including the request for international assistance. Following Concern Worldwide's successful application of the model in Kenya and Uganda, the NGO is exploring options to implement the approach in areas of Ethiopia and Niger, both subject to recurring nutrition crises.

## Identifying the Long-Term Health Consequences of Acute Malnutrition

Through \$500,000 in FY 2017 funding, USAID/OFDA is supporting Plan International to determine the long-term effects of acute malnutrition on children and develop a package of interventions to enhance recovery for malnourished children.

In coordination with the nutrition-focused NGO Valid International and Ethiopia's Jimma University, Plan International is conducting a research study in Ethiopia to compare children previously diagnosed and treated for acute malnutrition with children who were not diagnosed or treated. The results of the study will support efforts to strengthen humanitarian nutrition interventions and ensure malnourished children's complete recovery from therapeutic feeding programs.