

NUTRITION SECTOR UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2006

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID/OFDA is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to prevent and treat acute malnutrition. USAID/OFDA nutrition interventions, where possible, are community-based and linked to local health systems. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$20 million to treat moderate and severe acute malnutrition, build health staff capacity to prevent and treat acute malnutrition, educate community members on nutrition, and support operational research to further best practices in emergency nutrition interventions.

COMMUNITY-BASED THERAPEUTIC CARE PROGRAMS

With USAID/OFDA support, Valid International pioneered a new, community-based therapeutic care (CTC) approach to the treatment of acute malnutrition, bringing nutrition services closer to the household and community through decentralized sites at existing community health facilities. The CTC approach combines five key components: supplementary feeding programs, outpatient therapeutic programs, stabilization centers, community outreach, and ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF). Under the CTC approach, outreach workers screen children for acute malnutrition, referring only those with medical complications to facilities and enabling the majority of children to be treated at home with basic drugs, take-home RUTF rations, and community-based follow-up. CTC programs reduce child mortality rates by improving early detection and case management, increasing coverage, reducing recurring cases, and ensuring continuity of care after discharge.

USAID/OFDA and other USAID offices support CTC programs as part of both disaster responses and development initiatives. In FY 2006, USAID/OFDA provided \$6.1 million to support CTC programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Somalia, and Sudan. In addition, USAID/OFDA is devoting resources to train nutrition practitioners in CTC programs as well as actively advocating for the adoption of CTC protocols by country.

CTC PROGRAMS PRODUCE DRAMATIC RESULTS IN MALAWI

In 2005, successive failed rains and poor harvests in Malawi had a particularly harsh effect on young children. To address severe acute malnutrition, USAID/OFDA worked through two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to expand CTC activities and integrate treatment into existing national strategies for combating acute malnutrition. The NGO Concern partnered directly with national, regional, and local organizations to expand CTC networks and broaden support for CTC practitioners. Management Sciences for Health (MSH) established 59 outpatient therapeutic programs, co-located with existing health centers and hospital-based nutritional rehabilitation units, to increase the geographic coverage of interventions and make therapies



A malnourished child enjoys Chiponde, a peanut-based therapeutic food produced locally in Malawi. (Project Peanut Butter)

more accessible for local populations. Teaming up with district health management teams, MSH also recruited and trained staff, including district nutrition coordinators, health facility providers, and additional training teams.

By supporting CTC programs in Malawi, USAID/OFDA significantly improved the treatment of moderate and severe acute malnutrition. The use of Chiponde, a locally made RUTF, benefited the local economy. Most importantly, the CTC program nearly tripled the treatment of acutely malnourished children as compared to traditional facilities-based treatment. USAID/OFDA's support for CTC programs encouraged communities and local and national governments to obtain the resources to identify, address, and treat acutely malnourished children and caregivers effectively and efficiently.

ADDITIONAL USAID/OFDA ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS

- **Expanding the CTC approach.** USAID/OFDA and USAID/Global Health have supported NGOs Valid and Concern to develop a CTC field manual. USAID is supporting the development of a CTC training module in collaboration with Valid, Concern, and the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) Project and in consultation with other NGOs and U.N. agencies. Once the training module is developed, USAID/OFDA will fund CTC training workshops for NGO staff and host country ministries of health across Africa. In addition, through USAID/OFDA funding, FANTA has provided support to the U.N. World Health Organization to issue normative guidelines for the community management of severe acute malnutrition.
- **Supporting the U.N. Nutrition Cluster.** In 2005, the U.N. introduced the new cluster approach to improve coordination among U.N. agencies, implementing partners, and donors in complex emergencies and sudden-onset disasters. USAID/OFDA is actively participating in cluster efforts to develop a toolkit of nutrition interventions, map existing rapid assessment tools, and create an inter-agency training package and field guidance on rapid nutrition assessments.
- **Supporting the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN).** Since 1996, ENN has worked to improve the effectiveness of emergency food and nutrition interventions by identifying and disseminating lessons learned. USAID/OFDA is funding ENN to conduct an extensive review to determine the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of emergency supplementary feeding programs compared to other nutrition interventions. In addition, USAID/OFDA supports core ENN activities such as the tri-annual production of "Field Exchange," a publication to share best practices in the emergency food and nutrition sectors.
- **Supporting the U.N. Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN).** The SCN promotes cooperation among U.N. agencies and partner organizations in support of global efforts to end malnutrition. USAID/OFDA funds the SCN and supports the production of the quarterly "Nutrition in Crisis Situations" report. In addition, USAID/OFDA co-chairs the Nutrition in Emergencies working group.
- **Supporting new survey methodologies.** Through a grant to FANTA, USAID/OFDA supports operational research on the use of the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) statistical method in health and nutrition surveys. LQAS approaches allow for rapid collection and analysis of representative data on global acute malnutrition in emergency settings.