

BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



Nutrition

OVERVIEW

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) remains at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to provide nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations around the world. Through its efforts to prevent and treat child and maternal wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition; promote maternal, infant, and young child nutrition in crisis contexts; and empower partners by improving access to high-quality data on nutrition, USAID/BHA continues to lead the sector by combining technical expertise with programming, operational support, and innovation. USAID/BHA-supported nutrition programs are community-based, linked to local health systems, and utilize evidence-based approaches that decrease morbidity and mortality resulting from malnutrition.

USAID/BHA Nutrition
Funding in FY 2023

\$866,871,481

In FY 2023, USAID/BHA supported more than 50 partners, including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies, to address nutrition needs in nearly 40 countries, including Afghanistan, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Sudan. The majority of USAID/BHA's nutrition support occurs in Africa's Eastern and Sahel regions, two areas where recurring droughts have severely affected communities' abilities to produce and purchase diverse foods, thereby increasing the risk of malnutrition among vulnerable populations.

Building Global Nutrition Cluster Capacity Responding to Partners on the Ground

Multiple shocks, including climate change, conflicts, and economic downturns, have led to protracted food crises, with an estimated 238 million people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity during 2023—approximately 10 percent more than 2022, according to the European Commission’s Department for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). In addition to providing resources for programmatic response, USAID/BHA also supported the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to innovate nutrition programs, provide coordination and technical support to nutrition-focused responses, and strengthen supply chains to expedite the delivery of critical nutrition supplies across the world. During FY 2023, the Global Nutrition Cluster—alongside NGO nutrition partners at the subnational, national, regional, and global levels—bolstered emergency preparedness by staffing five rapid response team members capable of conducting up to 27 deployments to strengthen national coordination systems and support nutrition in emergency programming.¹

Supporting Infant Feeding in Emergencies

Children ages 23 months and younger are particularly vulnerable to death, illness, and malnutrition with rates of child mortality surging by up to 70 percent during emergencies and crises, according to Save the Children Federation (SCF). During FY 2023, USAID/BHA continued to support SCF to expand maternal, infant, and young child nutrition in emergencies (IYCF-E) services through implementing capacity building, technical assistance, and training sessions, and by developing guidelines, resources, and toolkits. The partner developed and disseminated IYCF-E curriculums for implementing partners, developed new IYCF-E curriculums targeting frontline workers, expanded expertise on the management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants six months and younger and their mothers (MAMI), and facilitated peer-to-peer learning through partnerships.

Improving Food Assistance Safety and Quality through Food Technology

In FY 2023, USAID/BHA advanced critical workstreams covering food technology, safety, and quality to support the availability of nutritious food for vulnerable groups. Throughout the year, USAID/BHA collaborated with other U.S. Government agencies—including the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—to enhance the agencies’ collective capabilities to test food commodity packaging and innovate new methods to prevent food loss and food waste. In collaboration with the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center and the USDA Agricultural Research Service, USAID/BHA identified packaging options geared towards reducing post-harvest losses and decreasing commodity infestation to improve food quality. USAID/BHA also collaborated with the USDA Federal Grain Inspection Service and the UN World Food Program (WFP) to advance fortified rice testing to support global efforts in scaling up fortification programs using fortified rice as a key nutritious food commodity for vulnerable populations worldwide.

USAID/BHA also continued its active engagement with international partners and suppliers to update and harmonize food production and safety standards during the year. For example, USAID/BHA led a technical working group on specialized nutritious food products (SNFP)—such as ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), ready-to-use supplementary food (RUSF), and Super Cereal Plus—to discuss protein and its role in ensuring the nutritional quality of SNFPs and to prioritize protein research investments. Similarly, throughout FY 2023,

¹ The coordinating body for humanitarian nutrition activities, comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders

USAID/BHA also supported and collaborated with the Interagency Working Group on Harmonization of Specialized Nutritious Foods—including USAID/BHA’s international partners, UNICEF and WFP—to coordinate among agencies that procure and program with specialized nutritious foods. As a result of this collaboration, USAID/BHA hosted an annual meeting in Washington, D.C., to discuss commodity quality, programming and research, and supplier audits, and participated in a separate international technical meeting discussing RUTF suppliers.

Supporting Development of New Guidance on Wasting and Nutritional Edema

During 2023, USAID/BHA participated as an observer as the World Health Organization (WHO) developed new guidelines on the prevention and management of wasting and nutritional edema in infants and children ages five years and younger; WHO released the new guideline in November 2023. The guideline prompted several operational changes in the delivery of wasting programming, including increasing focus on efforts to prevent wasting and nutrition edema, allowing for community health workers to provide treatment services, and establishing specific protocols for moderate acute malnourished children. The guideline also aims to expand coverage and guide governments through strategies to effectively treat and prevent wasting.

Concluding the USAID Advancing Nutrition Project

In FY 2023, USAID Advancing Nutrition—USAID’s flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project—completed its fifth and final year of providing technical assistance and developing guidance and tools for USAID and its implementing partners. During the five years, USAID Advancing Nutrition included a focus on nutrition in humanitarian contexts and social and behavior change, a practice geared towards raising awareness, reducing misinformation, and addressing the barriers preventing individuals and communities from practicing life-saving behaviors to improve health outcomes. The lessons learned from providing technical assistance to Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSA) included the development of a comprehensive guide for women and children to improve diets through local foods and a report advising relief actors on how to engage with men on nutrition programming. At the country level, the project developed a study of the RUTF supply chain in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the interactive, evidence-based USAID Nawiri Framework in northwestern Kenya, which educates users on the causes of persistent acute malnutrition. Informed by the outputs of USAID Advancing Nutrition, USAID’s approach addresses both direct and underlying causes of malnutrition and links humanitarian assistance with development programming to help build resilience to shocks in communities vulnerable to malnutrition.



USAID/BHA staff visit the USAID Nawiri program in Kaichemeri settlement in Kenya’s Turkana County. *Photo courtesy of Mercy Corp.*

More information on USAID/BHA sectors can be found at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/what-we-do/humanitarian-sectors](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/what-we-do/humanitarian-sectors)