Nutrition: A Key Ingredient for Healthy Growth

The United States has been a global leader in ending hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty through its commitments to and efforts in global food security, agriculture development, and improved nutrition. The 20% stunting reduction target in Feed the Future focus regions, and development of the USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy along with the U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan, put the United States government on a path to achieve significant gains in the fight against malnutrition.

The U.S. is one of 193 countries committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched in 2016, which include a target of ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030. 2016 also marked the launch of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition, which hopes to bring attention and momentum to efforts to end malnutrition. Additionally, the G7 put forward in 2016 a Vision for Action on Food Security and Nutrition, which prioritizes empowering women through agriculture and food systems, improving nutrition through a people-centered approach, and ensuring sustainability and resilience within agriculture and food systems. U.S. government leadership is critical to ensuring the success of these initiatives and to catalyze movement on nutrition from other donors and governments.

InterAction Recognizes

- **The U.S. must continue to include nutrition as a key priority in its global poverty agenda, including supporting key initiatives that focus on nutrition.** In just three years, the United States and its partners contributed to the reduction of stunting by 9% in Ethiopia, nationally. In Bangladesh, the United States contributed to a stunting reduction of 14.4% in just three years in two major regions. These achievements can be sustained and replicated elsewhere if the U.S. government, and especially USAID, continues to make sure that improved nutrition is a priority of U.S. foreign assistance. Support must continue for implementing the nutrition components of Feed the Future and Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths, the USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy, and the U.S. Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan. These policies ensure that nutrition actions across USAID and the U.S. government are coordinated and that relevant programs result in a higher impact on nutrition.

- **The U.S. government must lead on the global stage, including increasing and leveraging funding and policy commitments to improve nutrition.** Now is the time to make new financial funding and policy commitments to nutrition at the next Nutrition for Growth Summit. New research done by the World Bank, the Results for Development Institute, and 1,000 Days confirms the need for an additional $7 billion per year over the next 10 years in nutrition-specific investments by donors and developing countries in order to meet the global nutrition targets set forth by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2012 and enshrined in the SDGs in 2015. In addition to funding, the U.S. should continue to follow through on its commitment to implement the Global Nutrition Coordination Plan (GNCP). The next four years will present an array of opportunities for the U.S. to highlight the importance of nutrition on the international stage.

- **Nutrition-specific funding must be prioritized, along with sustaining investments in nutrition-sensitive programs in agriculture and research, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).** Nutrition-specific investments (such as diversification and micronutrient supplementation or fortification, promotion of optimum breastfeeding, complementary feeding practices, etc.), alongside nutrition-sensitive investments (including agriculture, social safety nets, comprehensive early child development, etc.) act as global health multipliers. When people are well-nourished, their immune systems are strengthened and they are less likely...
to become sick. Building on U.S. leadership in related global health successes such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, a greater infusion of nutrition financing to combat maternal and child mortality would have a great impact on addressing communicable and non-communicable diseases. Leveraging preexisting delivery mechanisms to reach the most vulnerable would enhance nutrition impact and health outcomes. Aligning U.S. development programs with WHA targets, including reduction of wasting (or severe acute malnutrition), anemia, and increased exclusive breastfeeding, would elevate the nutritional status of women and girls, yielding health benefits, reductions in maternal and child mortality, high economic returns, and support for women’s empowerment. These efforts must be complemented by investments in agriculture, WASH, and social protection that lead to improved nutrition and in research on how to maximize nutritional impact.

Upcoming Opportunities

- **Nutrition for Growth Pledge [2017]:** As a leading nutrition donor, the U.S. government must pave the way in stepping up funding for and prioritization of high-impact, proven, evidence-based nutrition interventions that save lives and drive progress in global health and economic development. Given the current strong congressional support and global interest, it will be critical to capitalize on momentum from 2016 with a strong nutrition pledge at the next Nutrition for Growth Summit. The nutrition community is calling on Italy to host the next pledging moment alongside the 2017 G7 Summit. A bold U.S. financial and policy commitment to nutrition will demonstrate U.S. leadership and encourage other countries to follow suit.

- **Annual Budget and Appropriations Cycle [Ongoing]:** In recent years, efforts to improve nutrition have received increasingly strong bipartisan support from both the administration and Congress. The Nutrition in Global Health Programs account at USAID, funded through State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations, has seen modest but steady increases, even as the total amount of global nutrition funding budgeted by the administration has fluctuated. Nutrition-specific funding is the backbone of how the World Health Assembly Targets will be met, and the Global Health Nutrition account must be at least doubled to begin to see progress on scaling up programs that will fight stunting and malnutrition.

- **The Global Food Security Act [Ongoing]:** The U.S. Congress passed the Global Food Security Act with strong bipartisan support in 2016. The bill authorized funding for agriculture development and the Emergency Food Security Program through fiscal year 2018. It also required the U.S. government to create and submit a global food and nutrition security strategy with input from all 11 departments and agencies. As the legislation is implemented, there are opportunities to use nutrition-sensitive investments to drive down stunting and to better target the nutritional needs of the 1,000-day window from pregnancy to the child’s second birthday.

- **The Reach Every Mother and Child Act [Ongoing]:** This legislation authorizes a “whole-of-government strategy to end preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths globally and ensure healthy and productive lives within a generation.” This legislation enjoyed broad, bipartisan support with over 180 co-sponsors in the 114th Congress. If the 115th Congress considers the legislation, nutrition should continue to be prioritized since 45% of child mortality and 20% of maternal mortality are nutrition-related. This could be accomplished with a strategy that builds on evidence-based, high-impact actions including efforts to improve nutrition.

Additional Materials

- Healthy Food for a Healthy World: Leveraging Agriculture and Food to Improve Global Nutrition, 2015, [bit.ly/2cRnkek](bit.ly/2cRnkek)