United States Donor Profile

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39
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The US is the largest donor to nutrition globally; funding is mainly provided through US global health and food security programs

The US is the single largest donor to global nutrition efforts, disbursing US$3.2 billion in 2016 for both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions (see box), according to the Global Nutrition Reports from 2014-2018. USAID leads the US’ nutrition efforts. There are several key documents that guide the US government’s work on nutrition:

- The Joint Strategic Plan FY2018-2022 of the State Department and USAID refers to food security, including nutrition, as a cross-sectoral, cross-agency priority.
- USAID’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025 sets goals across US nutritional initiatives, addresses direct and underlying causes of malnutrition, and highlights the importance of linking development and humanitarian assistance to increase the impact of US global nutrition efforts. Broadly, it identifies three priorities in line with the 2025 World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets: 1) decrease chronic malnutrition, measured by stunting, 2) maintain Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) below 15%, and 3) decrease malnutrition in women of reproductive age and children under five, with a focus on the 1,000-day window between the beginning of pregnancy and the child’s second birthday.
- The US Government Global Nutrition Coordination Plan 2016-2021 aims to strengthen the impact of the diverse US nutrition portfolio “through better communication, collaboration, and linking research to program implementation”.
- The 2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy, from USAID’s Office of Food for Peace within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, outlines two key strategic objectives for the program:
  1. improving and sustaining food security and
  2. embracing nutritional security. It supports Feed the Future and other nutrition-related strategies and objectives.

The US government has made several commitments to international nutrition initiatives over the past years.

Nutrition-specific: Interventions that address immediate causes of undernutrition and have the improvement of nutrition (i.e., support for exclusive breastfeeding, supplementary feeding, etc.) as their primary objective.

Nutrition-sensitive: Interventions that address underlying causes of malnutrition and that take into account cross-sector actions and impacts (i.e., improving access to diverse foods).

The US was integral to the founding of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), housed at the World Bank, during the US’ G20 presidency in 2009. According to GAFSP records, the US disbursed US$653 million in total to GAFSP as of December 2017. In 2017, the US announced that it would no longer fund GAFSP and has not appropriated money to it since that time.

According to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the US provided US$151 million in basic nutrition support in 2017, up from US$142 million in 2016. US funding to nutrition increased significantly between 2010 and 2017, largely due to Feed the Future, a whole-of-government initiative to drive economic and agricultural development and food security (see ‘Sector: Agriculture’). Since 2009, the government has had a nutrition-specific budget line in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPs) bill, which provides funding to basic nutrition, channeled bilaterally.

In FY2019, basic nutrition was funded at US$145 million, a US$20 million increase from FY2018. President Trump continues to propose significant cuts to nutrition programs, with his FY2020 budget again requesting just US$79 million. The House SFOPs FY2020 bill funds basic nutrition at the same level as FY2019. The Senate has yet to take up the SFOPs bill.

USAID leads nutrition efforts, coordinating a ‘whole-of-government’ approach

USAID leads the US’ nutrition efforts, which are largely integrated through the agency’s work in global health, food security and assistance, and agriculture. US global nutrition activities primarily occur within the frame-
work of Feed the Future, and for food assistance through Food for Peace. In addition, USAID’s Bureau for Global Health (which houses the Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition) and for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (which houses the Office of Food for Peace) also help implement nutrition and food-security cooperation. If Congress approves the proposed USAID reorganization, a Center for Nutrition will be housed in the new Bureau for Resilience and Food Security.

The US Department of Agriculture funds Food for Peace, implemented by USAID, as well as the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program. The Department of Agriculture implements the latter through the Foreign Agricultural Service.

Other US development cooperation programs, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, also provide some nutrition support both in terms of financing and implementation.

Congress authorizes, oversees, and funds the US government’s nutrition-specific funding as well as related programs within Feed the Future through its annual SFOPs. It does not specify an overall funding level for Feed the Future, but rather allocates funds separately for related activities and accounts, including nutrition, global health programs (implemented by USAID), bilateral food security and agriculture activities (implemented by USAID, MCC, and other agencies), and related multilateral organizations.