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### U.S. Announces \$46 Million Award to Improve Nutrition of Infants and Young Children in Developing Nations

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**WASHINGTON, DC** - The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a \$46 million award to the nonprofit (PATH) to improve nutrition of infants and young children in developing nations by promoting breastfeeding, complementary feeding practices and maternal nutrition.

For millions of children, damage from hunger and malnutrition can cause death or disabilities that last a lifetime. Almost all nutritional deficiencies impair immune function and other host defenses leading to a cycle of longer-lasting and more severe infections and ever-worsening nutritional status. The period from birth to two years of age is particularly important because of the rapid growth and brain development that occurs during this time. In developing nations, the period is often marked poor nutrition that leads to impeded growth, micronutrient deficiencies, and common childhood illnesses such as diarrhea, as children transition from breastfeeding to solid foods.

"Improving nutritional intake in young children has long-lasting health effects, and leads to improved nutrition and physical growth, reduced susceptibility to common childhood infections and better resistance to cope with them," said Richard Greene, Director of the Office of Health, Infectious Disease and Nutrition at USAID.

Managed by PATH, the Infant and Young Child Feeding Program (IYCF) is USAID's flagship project in this area -- expanding upon 20 years of program experience to increase optimal feeding practices among mothers and their infants. This includes promoting:

- **Breastfeeding** - This is especially important during the first few days after delivery when colostrum is produced, an important source of nutrition and antibody protection for the newborn.
- **Complementary feeding practices** - In the transition from breastfeeding to consuming solid foods, children from the age of 6 months are fed small quantities of semi-solid foods throughout the day from the family's diet.
- **Infant feeding during illness** - During illness, children's fluid needs increase because of fluid loss from loose and repeated stools. Continued breastfeeding prevents dehydration and provides important micronutrients that assist in recovery from infection.
- **Infant feeding and HIV** - The HIV epidemic has drawn increased attention to the importance of improving infant and young child feeding practices to ensure HIV-free survival of infants and children through alternatives to breastfeeding that are acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable, and safe; assessments in decision-making on when to stop breastfeeding; how to maintain the health of non-breastfed infants; and how to ensure nutritional support to individuals receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- **Maternal nutrition** - Nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy lead to low birth weight infants, which is a significant contributor to newborn deaths. Giving adequate priority to maternal nutrition increases early childhood survival, but also benefits safe motherhood initiatives that address anemia and post-partum hemorrhaging as a cause of maternal mortality.

For more information on USAID's programs in nutrition, please visit [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/)

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