



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/feed-future-tackles-undernutrition-nepal>

Feed the Future Tackles Undernutrition in Nepal



Micaela Arthur/USAID

Feed the Future-trained community health volunteers provide nutrition education and cooking demonstrations to mothers in Rasuwa district, Nepal.

In Nepal, several coordinated Feed the Future efforts are leveraging opportunities for improved food security and evidence-based nutrition interventions.

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition in Asia, led by Tufts University, has been supporting research and capacity building to inform nutrition policy in Nepal since 2011. One activity under the Nutrition Innovation Lab conducts an annual household survey measuring changes in behavior, nutrition and food security in 21 sites across Nepal, as well as a longitudinal survey (i.e. where data are collected repeatedly from the same subjects over time) on the perspectives and experiences of nutrition stakeholders ranging from central government officials to community service providers. The results of this research will inform the upcoming rollout of Nepal's national Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan as well as the expansion of several successful and comprehensive nutrition programs.

In November 2014, the Nutrition Innovation Lab joined the Nepal Institute of Medicine and Nepal Agriculture Research Council in hosting a symposium to share evidence-based solutions to nutrition challenges in Nepal. The event convened over 300 participants from government, universities, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in Kathmandu to discuss topics including food pricing, new varieties of vitamin A-rich sweet potatoes, home gardens and livestock, and food security response analysis and planning.

A complementary project in Nepal, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), combines interventions in health; nutrition; family planning; water, sanitation and hygiene; backyard poultry; and homestead gardens. This comprehensive approach means the same families that receive nutritional counseling also plant small gardens, learn healthy pregnancy and birth practices, breed chickens for protein and build latrines. After just one year, a Feed the Future Nutrition Innovation Lab survey showed that more than 40 percent of stakeholders across project sites noted that resources are now being adequately targeted toward nutrition needs, compared with only 29 percent in non-project sites. Through the project, USAID has also leveraged more than \$400,000 from local budgets to fund health and nutrition projects, indicating increasing political will for these efforts.

This global health program has also made inroads in improving infant health in Nepal. Since 2011, promotion of exclusive breastfeeding of children under six months has contributed to an increase in this practice from 46 to 64 percent. Over the same time period, the project's initial 25 districts saw a nearly 20 percent increase in children under two eating a minimum acceptable diet. Finally, 65 of 68 Village Development Committees have been declared "Open Defecation Free", an important measure in reducing rates of diarrhea and chronic gut inflammation, which are contributors to undernutrition.

This project has expanded to 16 additional districts across Feed the Future's target areas with its integrated package of interventions, reaching 625,000 households in 41 of Nepal's 75 districts. While population-level data on stunting will not be available until 2016, Feed the Future is increasing momentum and accelerating Nepal's progress in tackling undernutrition.