Improving nutrition and health for pregnant women, newborns and young children in the Philippines

The “Right Start Initiative” is a comprehensive program reaching nine countries in Asia and Africa, designed and run by Nutrition International in order to improve the quality of nutrition for millions of adolescent girls, women of reproductive age, newborns and young children. In the Philippines, Nutrition International will invest $4.3M (CAD) over the life of Right Start. The program is two-fold. Nutrition International aims to: (1) reach 91,000 pregnant women with evidence based high impact nutrition interventions; and (2) build the capacity of health workers to promote interventions that will improve the survival, nutritional status, growth and development of 142,000 infants and young children.

The Need

In the Philippines, one in four pregnant women is anaemic¹, which puts her at risk of potentially deadly complications during delivery, and could lead to fetal development issues. Over 20 per cent of newborns are too small at birth² and only one in four infants is exclusively breastfed.³ In addition, over 80 per cent of infants 6-23 months are not fed the minimum acceptable diet they need to be healthy.⁴

Our Goal

The program aims to prevent and control anaemia in pregnant women and young children, and low birth weight in newborns. It also seeks to avert deaths in infants and children under five. Well-nourished infants and young children are more disease-resistant, and have a better chance of becoming contributing members of society. The program will have positive social and economic impacts by eliminating obstacles that malnutrition imposes on some of the most vulnerable populations, preventing them from reaching their full potential and that of the next generation.

¹ National Nutrition Survey 2015
² National Demographic and Health Survey 2013
³ National Nutrition Survey 2015
⁴ National Nutrition Survey 2015
Interventions and impact by 2020

142,000 children under two years old in 45 municipalities in 7 provinces will benefit from improved nutrition. Nutrition International will promote the adoption and scale-up of interventions which will establish a critical link between prevention and treatment of child undernutrition as a continuum of care to help reduce wasting and stunting in infants and young children. National policies and guidelines on infant and young child nutrition and micronutrient supplementation will be revised and/or updated to support implementation of nutrition interventions during the critical 1,000-day window (from conception to a child’s second birthday).

Community health workers will receive training as well as job aids and/or tracking tools to improve their skills in effective and appropriate infant and young children nutrition counselling and provision of micronutrient powders. Nutrition and breastfeeding support groups will be organized or reconstituted in the communities to serve as a platform for nutrition education, counselling, client and service delivery tracking activities. Mothers and caregivers will receive guidance on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, introduction of timely and adequate complementary foods and how to add micronutrient powders to these foods – and ensure their consumption at home.

91,000 pregnant women in 45 municipalities in 7 provinces will receive nutrition education and counselling at health facilities in communities, as well as iron-folic acid supplements to take during their pregnancy to reduce the risk of maternal anaemia and infections, low birth weight and preterm birth. Selected national policies and guidelines to address maternal nutrition will be reviewed and updated with government partners. Community health workers will receive training as well as job aids and/or tracking tools to improve their capacity to deliver these interventions and promote adherence to iron-folic acid supplementation throughout pregnancy. Pregnant women will be engaged to actively participate in nutrition and breastfeeding support group activities along with mothers of children aged 0-24 months.

All 45 municipalities in 7 provinces will be assisted to enhance their local nutrition action plans by strengthening nutrition specific interventions, developing and issuing corresponding administrative issuances or local legislations to support continued implementation of nutrition interventions during the 1,000 day window.

Expectations from the project by 2020

Avert deaths in infants and young children.
Reduce the number of low birth weight newborns.
Reduce anaemia cases in pregnant women and young children.
Reduce stunting in children under five.

The Right Start Initiative:
A catalytic platform for change

The Right Start Initiative is based on five pillars: high-impact programs, resource mobilization, new strategic partnerships, technical leadership, and advocacy. With $75M (CAD) in anchor funding granted by the Canadian government, Nutrition International is launching programs in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal and Tanzania, aiming to reach 50 million women, adolescent girls, newborns and young children by 2020.

These programs include packages of interventions adapted to each country: weekly iron and folic acid supplementation for adolescent girls, food fortification, iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women, as well as solutions to improve nutrition for infants and young children. Building on the anchor funding, Nutrition International is reaching out to donors, foundations and the private sector working for global nutrition to leverage this investment with the objective of doubling its reach to 100 million people.

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About Nutrition International

Founded in 1992, Nutrition International is a global organization dedicated to delivering proven nutrition interventions to those who need them most. Working in partnership with countries, donors and implementers, our experts conduct cutting-edge nutrition research, support critical policy formulation, and integrate nutrition into broader development programs. In more than 60 countries, primarily in Asia and Africa, Nutrition International nourishes people to nourish life. Find out more at www.NutritionIntl.org