



USAID Empowers Mothers to Fight Malnutrition in Niger

Erratic rainfall and decreased agricultural production in the Sahel in 2012 resulted in a food security and malnutrition crisis that depleted household food stocks, resources, and livelihoods assets, exacerbating pre-existing levels of acute malnutrition in Niger. As of May 2014, approximately 1 million children younger than five years of age in Niger were experiencing acute malnutrition, according to the UN.

To enable malnourished children in Niger's acutely affected Zinder Region to receive the nutritional care they need, USAID is supporting the Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA) to train mothers to screen their children for malnutrition.

ALIMA has renamed the mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) method—which

uses a color-coded measurement tape to measure a child's nutritional status—as “Mothers Understand And Can do it.” By training mothers to measure children's arm circumference each week and bring them to health centers for treatment as needed, ALIMA is ensuring early detection and treatment of malnutrition among vulnerable children in Zinder.

With USAID support, ALIMA trained nearly 46,800 mothers and other caretakers, including fathers and grandmothers, to check their children for malnutrition from April 2014–2016. The program identified more than 8,800 severely malnourished children in Zinder. Following enrollment in a treatment program for severe acute malnutrition, 88 percent of these children successfully recovered.

Mothers trained by ALIMA also detected malnutrition earlier than health workers conducting MUAC screenings, and children screened by mothers were much less likely to require inpatient treatment for complicated malnutrition cases, according to the results of a study published in the Belgian medical journal *Archives of Public Health* in September 2016.

By empowering mothers to take responsibility for their children's health, USAID is enabling acutely affected children in Zinder to quickly receive critical nutrition assistance.