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SNAPSHOT

Expanding Local Capacity to Improve Health & Nutrition

New training centers allow USAID-ACCESO to teach more people improved health and nutrition practices.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

María Elena Carbajal feeds her daughter Cristel at the inaugural training event at the new health center in Yaruconte, Copán. Since joining the project, Cristel has moved out of the bottom percentile of weight.

“Thanks to [the project], Cristel’s weight has greatly improved. She is also happier and more active.”

— María Elena Carbajal

Telling Our Story

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As part of its commitment to build local capacity and maximize impact, USAID-ACCESO is opening 40 nutrition training centers and providing training and equipment to more than 300 community health volunteers in target communities.

Rural health volunteers play a critical role in delivering health services to families via home visits and trainings at community centers. By expanding the number of qualified nutrition practitioners, USAID-ACCESO is able to reach an increasing number of beneficiaries living in poor or extreme poor conditions. To date, the project has provided 20 volunteer committees with specialized equipment to monitor and evaluate the nutritional status of children under 2 years old, and to manage cases of acute undernutrition.

The first project-supported nutrition training center opened in Yaruconte, Copán in August. The project expects to reach 6,520 rural households in 60 communities once all the equipment is distributed and the centers are operational.

The nutrition training centers will serve as convenient meeting points for mothers and children to attend trainings on diet diversification strategies; better household hygiene and sanitation practices; and the preparation of nutrient-rich foods using ingredients from their family plots. Each nutrition training center will be appointed with equipment such as eco-stoves, pots and pans, plates and cutlery, and containers for proper food storage.

Children in target communities are already showing positive improvement thanks these USAID-ACCESO interventions. From March to September 2012, the percentage of underweight children under 2 years old that demonstrated consecutive weight gain increased from 25 to 48 percent. Consistent weight gain leads to a reduction in the overall number of children in the bottom third percentile of weight.

María Elena Carbajal, of Yaruconte, is thrilled with the progress her one-year-old daughter, Cristel, has made since beginning following the project-recommended diet in February 2012.

Before project intervention, Cristel consistently weighed in the bottom percentile at her monthly check-ups. After working with USAID-ACCESO nutrition specialists, María Elena began feeding Cristel nutrient-rich foods and following the project’s feeding guide.

In six months, Cristel gained 2.5 pounds, moving her out of the bottom percentile and into a healthier weight range for her age. Her mother says she is also more alert and active, indicating healthy cognitive growth as well.

To date, the project has held more than 1,300 nutrition and health training events reaching more than 22,200 participants.