

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



Supporting MALNUTRITION PREVENTION activities for VULNERABLE GROUPS



WFP CUBA
Funding proposal

February, 2019

The World Food Programme (WFP) supports Cuban communities, authorities and institutions **to contribute to the food security and nutrition of the population**, with emphasis on the most vulnerable.

Since the beginning of its work in Cuba in 1963, WFP has implemented 21 emergency operations and 8 development projects, accounting for more than **302 million dollars**.

Main lines of work of WFP in Cuba:

- **Provide food assistance to nutritionally vulnerable groups** – children, pregnant and lactating women, elderly people – through social safety nets (day-care centres, primary schools, maternity and elderly homes, community canteens);
- **Strengthen agricultural value chains and their linkages with social safety nets** for the stable supply of nutritious and quality food;
- **Strengthen the resilience of communities, disaster risk management and adaptation capacities to climate change** at the local level.

1. SUMMARY

Malnutrition has negative consequences for people, families, communities and countries, hence the importance of breaking its intergenerational cycle. Cuba faces the challenge of preventing iron deficiency anemia, the main nutritional problem in pregnant women and children up to two years, as well as of guaranteeing the food security and nutrition for the elderly, a vulnerable group with an accelerated trend to increase.



The average anaemia prevalence rate is over 30% in the Eastern provinces, the most vulnerable in the country. In thirteen municipalities from the three provinces of Granma, Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba, over 40% of children under two suffer from anaemia, representing a severe public health problem. Iron-deficiency anaemia is mainly caused by insufficient consumption of iron-rich foods and vitamins due to a combination of economic factors and culturally inherited food patterns.



At the same time, Cuba is experiencing an accelerated population ageing process, which represents a growing concern in the country. The biological and socioeconomic vulnerability of elderly people can ultimately undermine their physical and economic access to foods, mainly to fortified food. The World Food Programme has accompanied the Government in developing an elderly care policy, focusing on their food security and nutrition.



This proposal will contribute to preventing malnutrition by increasing the intake of micronutrients in pregnant women, children and elderly people's regular diet with the stable distribution of fortified food, and sensitizing households on the importance of healthy eating habits. As fortified foods are not part of the monthly basket subsidized by the Government, their access by the most



vulnerable households is very limited. Due to economic constraints, only vulnerable groups supported by WFP receive them.

To promote the adoption of healthy eating habits – including the consumption of fortified food – a communication strategy will be implemented. It is expected that the implementation of an appealing and effective strategy will contribute to a better nutrition of the population.

Through this project proposal, WFP will assist over 12,500 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and 26,500 children under two in target municipalities, contributing to preventing and progressively reducing their anaemia prevalence, as well as its negative consequences. Around 3,000 elderly will also be assisted through the Family Support System (state-led community canteens that assist very vulnerable groups), contributing to preventing the nutritional deficiencies linked to the ageing process.

2. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Iron deficiency is the most frequent nutritional disorder in Cuba. The prevalence rate of anaemia among PLW and children under two – despite being mild or moderate – is high. Hence, iron deficiency is regarded as a severe public health problem. The anaemia prevalence rate is up to 38% in PLW and 31% among children aged 6-23 months in the Eastern provinces, representing the most vulnerable territories. The causes of iron-deficiency anaemia are mainly food related, such as the insufficient consumption of iron-rich foods and other vitamins that facilitate iron absorption.

The negative consequences of iron-deficiency anaemia in mother and children are well known. These include premature delivery, low birth weight, higher maternal death risk, as well as delays in the physical and mental development of children that can permanently limit their learning capacities, which will later affect working capacities. On a broader scale, they can affect the development of a region or a country.

Cuba is implementing a Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention and Control of Anaemia. However, the expected results have not yet been achieved. That is why WFP supports this Plan with the distribution of micronutrient powders and fortified foods in the most vulnerable municipalities. It should be noted that the most vulnerable households have very limited access to fortified foods (i.e. cereals) due to economic constraints. Moreover, no micronutrient powders are available in the country, despite representing a particularly cost-effective solution. A stable consumption of fortified foods is key to achieve nutrition-oriented results. That is why WFP will continue its efforts to mitigate the main challenges identified, such as limited access and negative cultural eating habits.

At the end of 2017, 20.1% of the Cuban population was 60 years old or more. According to estimates, the ageing index may rise to 21.5% in 2020, and to 30.3% in 2030. The rapidly increasing population ageing process poses significant challenges to households, society and the state apparatus. Biological and socio-economical vulnerability are combined at this life-cycle stage. In particular, biological vulnerability per se demands special attention to achieve proper food intake and an optimal nutritional status. In addition to biological vulnerability, the loss of autonomy, low incomes and role changes lead to economic, social and family vulnerability, which can ultimately



undermine the physical and economic access to foods and the deterioration of their nutrition and health, becoming a vicious circle.

Due to funding constraints, WFP has been able to provide sporadic assistance to elderly people with the fortified food included in this proposal. This fortified food was highly appreciated by both beneficiaries and the Government, generating a significant demand in a context where economic access to this type of foods is practically inexistent.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1 Objectives

1. Contribute to preventing and reducing iron-deficiency anemia in PLW and children under two in the most vulnerable municipalities.
2. Support the prevention of malnutrition in elderly people in the most vulnerable municipalities.
3. Contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.

3.2 Components

1. Distribution of fortified food to PLW, children aged 12-23 months and elderly;
2. Distribution of micronutrient powders to children aged 6-11 months;
3. Elaboration and dissemination of educational and visibility materials to promote healthy eating habits in the assisted vulnerable groups;
4. Implementation of a communication strategy aimed to change behaviour and promote healthy eating habits.

3.3 Expected results

- R1.** Anaemia prevalence rate in PLW and children under two is progressively reduced;
- R2.** Access to and consumption of a more nutritious diet, tailored to the age characteristics, is increased;
- R3.** The knowledge of beneficiaries and their family on healthy diet, nutrition and anaemia prevention is increased;
- R4.** An appealing and effective communication strategy – aimed to change behaviours that affect malnutrition – is implemented.



3.4 Geographical targeting

The proposed operation will focus on thirteen municipalities in the three Eastern provinces of Granma, Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba, where anaemia represents a serious health issue. WFP will support over 12,500 PLW and more than 26,500 children under two.

WFP will also support over 3,000 elderly people in Eastern municipalities, according to targeted criteria established by the Government.

Additionally, these beneficiaries and their families will benefit from the educational messages disseminated through the behavioural change communication strategy.

3.5 Implementation strategy and sustainability

This proposal is aligned to a key priority of the Cuban Government. Its activities will be channelled through the Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention and Control of Anaemia and the Comprehensive care programme for the elderly and will be implemented by relevant national and local institutions. The main cooperating partners will be the Ministry of Public Health – especially the National Nutrition Centre – and the Ministry of Internal Trade.

Distribution of fortified foods for PLW and children aged 12-23 month will be channelled through the bodegas (final distribution points to the population), using the government mechanisms already in place for delivering the monthly subsidized food basket. The distribution for elderly people will be carried out through the Family Support System (state-led community canteens that assist very vulnerable groups).

Distribution of micronutrient powders to children aged 6-11 months will be channelled through Family doctor's in communities.

WFP – and especially its field monitors – will be in charge of monitoring resources and processes.

Cooperating partners will also carry out monitoring activities throughout the different implementation levels.

Various key aspects will contribute to project sustainability, such as: alignment with key government priorities and inclusion into a national strategy; implementation by relevant government institutions;



use of the existing food distribution mechanisms in the country; as well as to the communication and capacity strengthening activities to boost its consumption by vulnerable groups. WFP's support to the local production of fortified food in the Eastern municipality of Granma also represents an opportunity to ensure project sustainability.

The activities entailed by the communication strategies for changing behaviour in food and nutrition will be implemented by PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, while the main implementing partner will be the Ministry of Health – specifically the National Centre for Health and Prevention of Diseases, the National Nutrition Centre and the Department of Chronic Diseases – supported by the Faculty of Communication of the Universities of Havana and Santiago de Cuba. The Ministry of Education and Agriculture will also participate in these activities.

4. TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET

The total estimated budget of this proposal amounts to **USD 700,000** mainly for:

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|---|---------|----------------|
| 1- Food transfer and Capacity Strengthening | | 520,000 |
| <i>Purchase of Super Cereal for PLW and the printing of educational and visibility materials</i> | 200,000 | |
| <i>Purchase of micronutrient powders and Super Cereal for children under two, as well as for the printing of educational and visibility materials</i> | 200,000 | |
| <i>Purchase of fortified food for elderly and the printing of educational materials</i> | 40,000 | |
| <i>Communication strategies for changing behaviour in food and nutrition</i> | 80,000 | |
| 2- Implementation Cost | | 27,731 |
| 3- Direct Support Costs | | 109,546 |
| Total Direct Cost (1+2+3) | | 657,277 |
| Indirect Support Costs = 6.5% | | 42,723 |
| TOTAL | | 700,000 |



United for preventing malnutrition in vulnerable groups

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