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Early Investments for Improved Nutrition Outcomes in Guatemala

Key Results

- 53% of children under 6 months old are exclusively breastfed
- 36% of infants are given liquids other than breast milk before initiating breastfeeding
- Over 50,000 people in Guatemala received professional nutrition and child health training in 2017

New mom Mileidy's 3-month-old daughter was irritable and frustrated every time she tried to breastfeeding, making Mileidy worry that her body could not produce enough milk to feed her hungry baby. Mileidy live in western Guatemala, in the municipality of Sibinal, where nearly 60 percent of children under 5 years old suffer from chronic malnutrition and food insecurity is prevalent. Luckily, Mileidy had a breastfeeding champion around to ease her fears: her brother, Ronal.

At just 25 years old, Ronal has become a key educator and promoter of optimal breastfeeding practices within his community. Ronal explained to Mileidy and her partner, Lino, that the issue was not a lack of milk, but that the baby was not attaching to her breast correctly. He showed them proper breastfeeding attachment techniques, and Mileidy was quickly able to stimulate enough milk production to satisfy her daughter's needs.

With nearly half of Guatemala's population under the age of 18, USAID has identified youth as a key influencer for improved health and nutrition. Through educational sessions, USAID teaches youth and young adults, like Ronal, about the importance of proper health and nutrition behaviors, including the benefits of breastfeeding. These youth leaders are then encouraged to use what they have learned to educate others in their community. By improving the rates of exclusive breastfeeding in countries like Guatemala, USAID helps children get the best start to life and supports more healthy, productive individuals, families, and communities, and more self-reliant societies.

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