

# Food supplements plus cash to poor families reduces rates of child malnutrition in Niger

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In Niger, interventions that combined the distribution of supplementary food with a cash transfer to poor families prevented acute malnutrition in young children more effectively than strategies that relied on either cash transfer or supplementary food distribution alone, according to a study by international researchers published in this week's *PLOS Medicine*.

The authors, led by Céline Langendorf from Epicentre in Paris, France, reached these conclusions by conducting a prospective intervention study in over 5000 [children](#) aged 6–23 months and their families living in 48 villages in the Madarounfa district of Niger. The authors compared the effectiveness of seven preventative strategies, including the distribution of different forms of nutritious supplementary foods with and without additional household support (family food ration or cash transfer) and cash transfer alone, on the rates of moderate and severe [acute malnutrition](#) in the enrolled children.

Using this approach, the authors found that the rate of moderate acute malnutrition was about twice as high among children who received the cash-only intervention than those who received any of the food supplements plus cash: the rate of moderate acute malnutrition was 3.33 cases per 100 child-months among children who received a supplementary food plus cash intervention compared to 7.97 cases per 100 child-months among those who received the cash-only intervention. For severe acute malnutrition, the rate was about three times higher among the children who received the supplementary food only compared

to those who received a supplementary food plus cash intervention.

The authors say: "These results can be used to guide donor decisions, particularly in the high-burden Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the operational strategies of agencies in their programmatic response to crises."

In an accompanying Perspective, Marko Kerac and Andrew Seal from University College London say: "Numerous messages arise from this paper that will play a major role in informing and shaping future policy, practice, and research."

**More information:** Langendorf C, Roederer T, de Pee S, Brown D, Doyon S, et al. (2014) Preventing Acute Malnutrition among Young Children in Crises: A Prospective Intervention Study in Niger. *PLoS Med* 11(9): e1001714. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001714](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001714)

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