

Fighting off malnutrition in children through ready-to-use foods in the peanut bu...

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The Peanut Butter Project started in 2004 by Mark Manary, M. D. who is a pediatrician that serves as the Helene Roberson Professor of Pediatrics at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. The goal of the Peanut Butter Project is to help children suffering from malnutrition. Malnutrition is the largest cause of child death in the world today, and Project Peanut Butter (PPB) uses locally produced and ready-to-use foods (RUTF). RUTF is made for severely malnourished children between the ages of 6 months and to 5 years old.

RUTF is an energy-dense, peanut butter like paste that consists of roasted ground peanuts, powdered milk, vegetable oil, sugar, and vitamins/minerals. Since peanuts contain mono-unsaturated fats, and are rich in protein and zinc, they are easy to digest. This is good for children's immune systems.

There are RUTF production companies in Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Ghana and many other international organizations such as UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders, and Clinton Health Access Initiative also purchase RUTF to use in their programs.

There are currently 20 clinics operated by PPB in southern Malawi, where PPB nurses assess children for malnutrition and then provide life-saving treatment to those who qualify at no cost to the child's family. When a child is brought to one of these clinics, their recent health history is reviewed. The child is then weighed, measured, and checked for malnourishment. Children are also checked for Edema which is when a child's body looks bloated due to the fluid in the child's body being shifted to their stomach. This is one of the biggest signs that a child is starving, because a healthy child's stomach

does not do this. If the child is malnourished, he/she is given a 2-week supply of RUTF. This RUTF is for the child to eat during the next couple of weeks. After these 2 weeks, the child's family brings the child back to the clinic for another check up. If the child is not fully recovered then the clinic gives the child another 2 week supply of food. Usually, a typical recovery for a malnourished child being treated with RUTF is 1-2 months. Many people have the question "won't most of these children become malnourished again after completing their therapy with RUTF?" after learning about The Peanut Butter Project, but this isn't true. Although that many of these children continue to live in severe poverty after being treated with RUTF, they very rarely become malnourished again. Research has shown that less than ten percent of malnourished children will relapse after being treated by Project Peanut Butter, due to the fact that a child's body has built up enough nutrition in their body to create a reserve. This means that even if a child is faced with another food shortage or has to deal with a sickness of some sort; they usually have enough nutrition in their body currently and strength due to the nutrition from the RUTF that they are able to fight through it without becoming malnourished again.

On the Project Peanut Butter website there are links that explain both how to donate to PPB and how to help advocate PPB. These are both very important in helping to keep The Peanut Butter Project going. Since The Peanut Butter Project gives free treatment to malnourished children, it relies greatly on donations from generous people. These donations are used to treat malnourished children, train health workers, and pay the nurses that take time out of their day to help these children. Advocates are also very

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important in keeping this project going. An advocate is a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause. The more people that advocate PPB, the more people that will know about PPB. This will lead to more donations to The Peanut Butter Project, and even more people advocating PPB.

The Peanut Butter Project is very important to malnourished children all across Africa and although I am not personally affected by malnourishment or Project Peanut Butter, I am so glad that this is going on. It gives me a lot of hope that this company is willing to give so many malnourished children free supplies of RUTF just so they can help them get better. I can only imagine the joy of a family after their child recovers from malnourishment after being so close to death. This company has helped so many children recover from malnourishment already and it continues to help even more children as time goes on. When I am finished with college, I hope to become an elementary school teacher. Many elementary school aged children all over the world are malnourished and dying from malnourishment every single year and I am so unbelievably happy that so many of these children are being helped by this project. Even though I will not have to deal with very many malnourished children working as a teacher here in the U. S, I'm glad that children and their families in other parts of the world are going to be helped by PPB.