



SN4A PHASE-I POLICY PAPER | APRIL 2019

# Achieving Sustainable Nutrition for All



KIT The Royal Tropical Institute



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

## Key messages

- Agriculture plays an undeniable role in supplying the diverse range of foods needed for a healthy diet.
- Nutrition sensitive agriculture (NSA) programmes help improve dietary diversity in women of reproductive age (WRA) and infants when they include nutrition behaviour change communication and are designed to empower women.
- To reach the most nutritionally vulnerable, communities need to be engaged in every stage from identifying their problems, aspirations and challenges to design and monitoring progress.
- Improved vertical and lateral governance is key: Nutrition Coordination Committees and platforms provide an opportunity for frontline workers to co-target and implement nutrition programmes.
- Evidence is needed on actions that are effective and scalable.

# Overview

The burden of malnutrition affects every country. The 2018 State of Food Security and Nutrition in World Report signals that for the third year in a row the number of undernourished is growing, reaching 821 million in 2017 or 1 in every 9 people. New data presented in the UN report, the Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2019, indicates that 237 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are suffering from chronic undernutrition, derailing the gains made in the past years. There is still a long road ahead to achieve the 2025 and 2030 targets for acute and chronic malnutrition, overweight and obesity. In fact, Uganda is on track for only 2 of the WHA targets, and Zambia, just one.

The common denominator across all forms of malnutrition is poor quality diets. Nutrition sensitive agriculture (NSA) can play a pivotal role in improving dietary quality, through diversifying and supplying safe and nutritious foods year round and creating and supporting demand in consumers. There are a number of

key pathways, including food access through own production, income from sale of commodities for improved health/food expenditure, improved pricing and market access, and women's empowerment, control over resources and workload.<sup>1,2</sup>

Sustainable Nutrition for All (SN4A) is an example of an integrated nutrition-sensitive approach. It seeks to improve nutrition outcomes by encouraging families to grow, and consume diverse food at the household level, particularly amongst women of reproductive age (WRA) and infants. The first phase of the project ran from January 2015 to December 2017, and was led by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCIDI), and funded by the

- 1 Ruel et al., 2018. Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture: What have we learned so far? *Global Food Security* 17, 128-153. IFPRI, Washington DC.
- 2 Gillespie, S., van den Bold, M., 2017. *Agriculture, Food Systems, and Nutrition: Meeting the Challenge*.

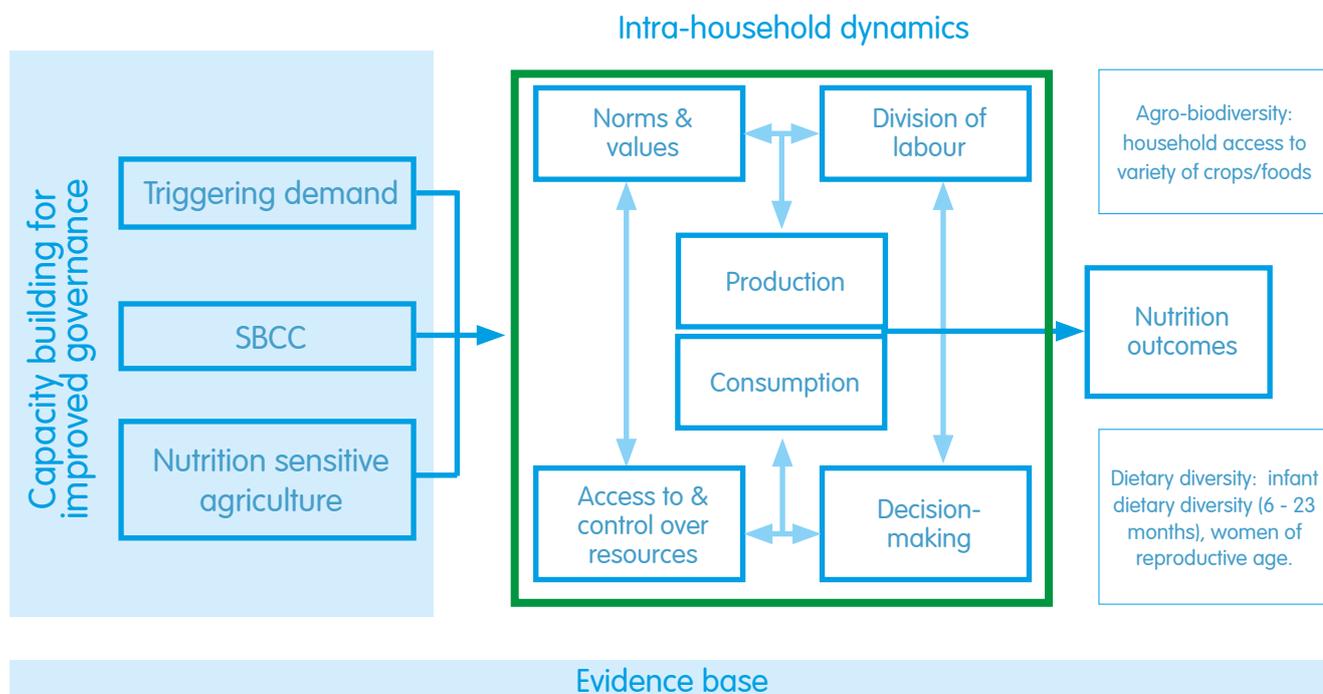


Figure 1: Sustainable Nutrition for All model through an intra-household lens

## Triggering nutrition coordination committees to plan for nutrition action

SN4A anchors its work in local and national structures. SN4A builds district governance capacity to innovatively work with the target communities, in an integrated multisectoral nutrition programme. At the district level, SN4A brings together key sectors, including agriculture, health, and community development, to develop and implement a unified nutrition action plan with targets for improved nutrition. The action plans are costed for demand triggering and behavioural change; improved supply of nutrient rich foods; and a structure for implementation, outlining roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. SNV's unique Triggering model, drawn from a modified community-led total sanitation (CLTS) methodology<sup>1</sup>, motivates people to work together to improve the nutritional status of women and children. Triggering makes clear that under-nutrition is a community-wide problem, and it helps individuals to identify the factors that lead to malnutrition. Triggering addresses men's and women's roles in the household and how these patterns affect the food family members eat. As part of Triggering, the community generates and uses data, including Community Mapping and Convergence Planning, to develop their own plans of action to address challenges. The triggering session also culminates in a call for action and the establishment of the Nutrition Action Group (NAGs). Post-triggering activities follow which are implemented by the NAGS under the oversight of the Hub Nutrition Coordinating committee (HNCC).

DNCC members are trained in the triggering methodology and follow up SBCC activities. This is through training, mentoring and frequent follow up to help committees understand their roles and link them directly to ward and village levels to implement activities. SN4A trains district staff from nutrition, agriculture, WASH and community development sectors in multisectoral SBCC strategies, which increases buy-in and supports them to develop an integrated plan in which they all have a role.

1 Evidence generated from SNV's programming in Zambia and Uganda shows that community-wide Triggering can be an effective tool for positive behavior change in [nutrition](#)

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Phase 1 covered two districts in Uganda (Kasese, Kyenjojo) and Zambia (Isoka, Chinsali). It involves four core pillars; triggering and maintaining demand for intra-household dietary diversity; social and behaviour change at the intra-household level; improving supply of nutrient-rich foods through agrobiodiversity and strengthening local and national governance capacity. Phase 1 was successful in increasing the dietary diversity score for WRA and infants 6-23 months (see figure 2). This policy brief builds on the SN4A series of technical briefs: multi-sectoral governance at the subnational level<sup>3</sup>; triggering for positive behaviour change in nutrition<sup>4</sup> and intra-household dynamics and dietary diversity<sup>5</sup>. It summarises a set of key policy and

3 The power of multi-sectoral governance in addressing malnutrition: Insights from Sustainable Nutrition for All Uganda and Zambia, Technical Brief No. 1

4 Triggering for positive behavior change in nutrition. Insights from Sustainable Nutrition for All Uganda and Zambia Technical Brief No. 2.

5 Intra-household dynamics and dietary diversity. Insights from Sustainable Nutrition for All Uganda and Zambia, Technical Brief No. 3.

programme recommendations based on the evidence and learnings from Phase 1.



## Finding a shared purpose: strengthening partnerships and community networks for improved agro-biodiversity and dietary diversity

The Triggering event lays the foundation for SNVs work to improve access to diverse foods in SN4A. Following that event, it is critical to work quickly with the community to help them see how they can address their problems. Working with the NAGs, the Team conduct participatory mapping to define the nutrition-sensitive agriculture resources available to the community. Mapping is also used to orient NAGs and help them to develop their Nutrition Action Plans which, through Convergence Planning, enable them to set targets for nutrition; dietary diversity; production of crops; animal source foods; year-round household agro-biodiversity; and women's workload. SN4A Team provide the support and technical guidance to the DNCC and support the district to capacitate the Ward and Village Committee members to enable them guide the NAG to implement their plan. Through Nutrition Hubs, community members learn about and practice such behaviours as how to grow nutritious crops using climate-smart agricultural practices and techniques for growing in areas that lack water; harvesting and processing crops; rearing, maintaining, and safely managing small livestock and poultry; community seed multiplication; and food preparation. Crops that are indigenous (with higher drought tolerance and pest resilience) and rich in Iron and Vitamin A, such as amaranth, and proteins, such as pulses are promoted.

To achieve greater outreach and enhanced learning, NAG members create smaller demonstration plots at their own homes, where neighbours can see methods that increase household agrobiodiversity and learn more about dietary diversity. Increasing access to diverse nutritious foods requires additional income. SNV also sees that creating employment opportunities for young women and men reaps significant social, health, and economic returns for communities. One of the challenges in community based approaches, is the sustainability of volunteer structures such as the NAGs. In SN4A, private sector linkages are being facilitated to create livelihoods and an economic incentive for community members. SN4A, for example is facilitating linkages between small scale producers and processing companies to supply maize, and other cash crops. Rather than NAGs coming under the government structure, they are independent, and empowered structures in the community and are incentivised to continue their nutrition activities through the market linkages of key crops. The economic linkages also reduce the drop-out rate for the community volunteers.

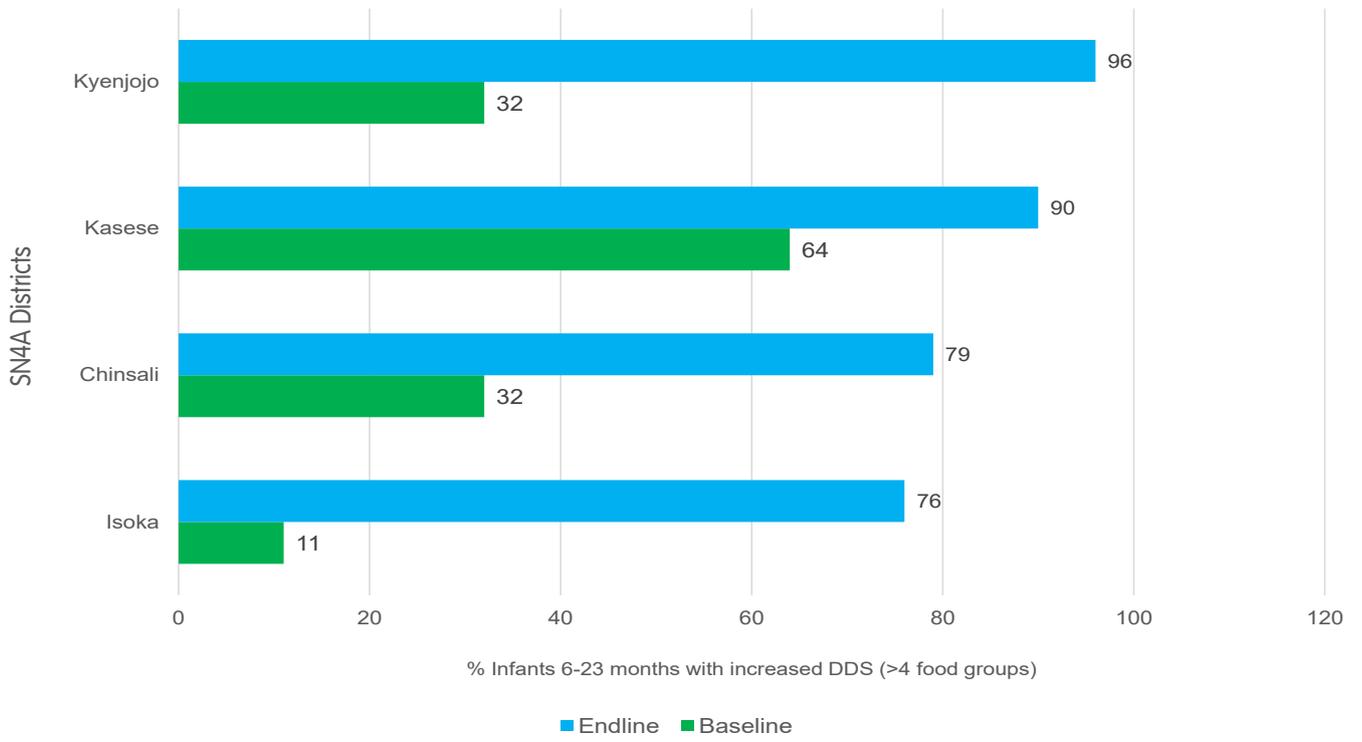
"We all thought we knew how to feed ourselves and our children but in fact we only thought meat and fish was good, not diverse food... it's a learning". NAG member, Uganda

"I am already grown up but my children aren't" Mother, Zambia on what triggered her

"Local available varieties, such as dodo can be eaten by everyone" HH member, Uganda



### Percentage improvement in dietary diversity of infants



### Percentage improvement in dietary diversity of women

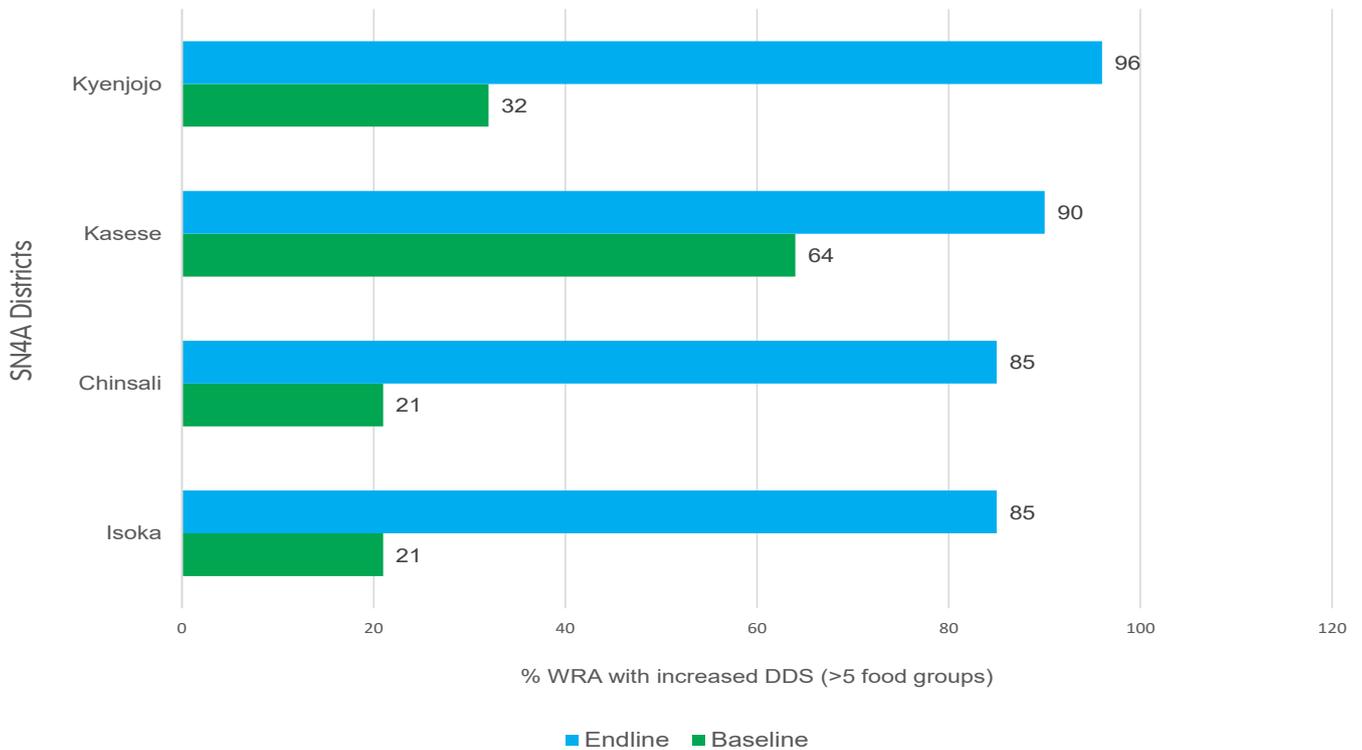


Figure 2: SN4A phase 1 results

# Recommendations

The SN4A team put forward the following set of recommendations to achieve sustainable nutrition for all.

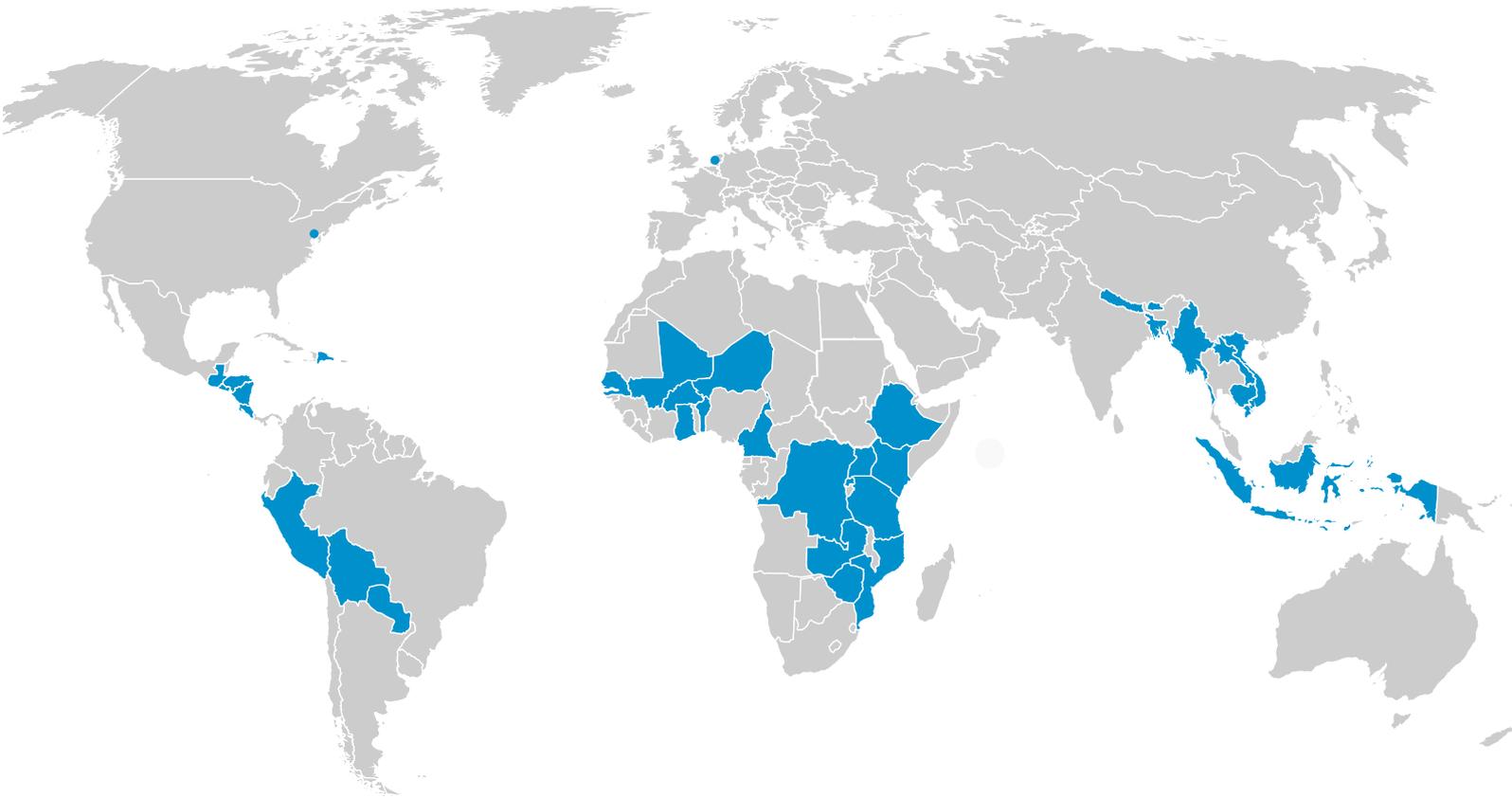
## To Governments:

- Ensure that the multi-sectoral platforms including Nutrition Coordination Committees are replicated and aligned from national to subnational level to ensure community reach, especially of the most vulnerable households; and support subnational nutrition coordination and implementation of strategies and plans.
- Strengthen capacity, including human and institutional capacity, in intersectoral as well as nutrition sensitive programming.
- Improve monitoring and evaluation at the sub-national level, including disaggregated nutrition data, and monitoring of nutrition activities embedded in district plans.
- Co-location of nutrition-specific and –sensitive programming is an effective way to achieve impact at scale. To achieve this we need information systems, aligned sector action plans and strong stakeholder coordination.

## To Practitioners and Sub-national Government

- Support the scalability of community driven SBCC nutrition strategies in different contexts as part of nutrition programming, without compromising on the effectiveness of the approach.
- Involve the communities themselves in the planning, implementation and review of the nutrition programme and ensure involvement of all members, male, female, young people and the elderly.
- Target emotional drivers of improved nutrition behaviours in a sensitive manner, through triggering.
- Use existing resources at community level, e.g. schools, to implement nutrition interventions.
- Leverage and expand the existing programmes to break down gender barriers to practicing optimal nutrition behaviours over time.
- Ensure that gender analysis informs the scope of nutrition programming within a given context.
- Invest in testing and piloting of what SBCC messages and implementation modalities work best with different household members to motivate positive change around deep rooted social norms.
- Ensure routine M&E includes a component promoting regular learning and reflection on changing intra-household dynamics.
- Support capacity building of front-line staff on addressing intra-household dynamics.
- Support sustainable and diverse food supply for adequate dietary intake year-round; including diversification and market systems.
- Apply the gender lens to NSA, and the quality of NSA services should be measured on how it engages, supports and empowers women and girls.

This should also include pro-poor interventions, where locally available food varieties are supported for remote smallholders. Innovations that could improve access, produce quality (nutritional value, and shelf-life), affordability, reduced labour and time burden should also be supported. Technical support is needed- for example, in good agricultural practices, use of labour saving technologies, promotion of local production, post-harvest processing and storage, awareness of nutrient content of locally available foods, dietary, safe food and hygiene practices. Resilience focused messages should be incorporated.



SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation, working in Agriculture, Energy, and Water, Sanitation & Hygiene. Founded in the Netherlands in 1965, we have built a long-term, local presence in more than 30 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Our global team of local and international advisors works with local partners to equip communities, businesses and organisations with the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services – empowering them to break the cycle of poverty and guide their own development.

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