



**EAT A BALANCED DIET TO**

# The Power of Multi-sectoral Governance to Address Malnutrition

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## Insights from Sustainable Nutrition for All in Uganda and Zambia

**Sustainable Nutrition for All Technical Brief No. 1**



# Sustainable Nutrition for All in Uganda and Zambia

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, in partnership with the Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen UR (CDI), the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation Agency (SDC) is implementing a new and innovative model to empower communities to reduce the causes of malnutrition themselves. The model, Sustainable Nutrition for All (SN4A), is currently being implemented (2015-2017) in four districts in Zambia and Uganda. The aim is to improve dietary diversity for all household members, with a particular focus on women of reproductive age (WRA) and infants under 2 years. The long term goal is to improve nutritional outcomes. SN4A addresses four critical pillars simultaneously. It induces behavioural change by triggering an understanding of the critical factors for improved nutrition, including production, consumption, care and sanitation practices. The triggering activities facilitate communities to undertake their own appraisal of how their nutrition habits impact their lives, particularly the physical and cognitive development of their children and their future education and employment prospects. Communities are supported to understand what they can do to improve the situation. They formu-

late their own solutions which are locally available i.e. strengthen year round access to nutritious agricultural food, by increasing household agro-biodiversity, as well as market development to generate income for improved food expenditure. To ensure sustainability and scalability of the approach, SN4A works with local and district level authorities, building their capacity to plan and implement nutrition sensitive strategies. A central pillar of the programme is to support the national, multi-sectoral policies by developing and strengthening district and sub-district nutrition coordination committees (NCCs). Experiences and learnings from this pillar are presented in the technical brief, "The power of multi-sectoral governance in addressing malnutrition - Insights gained from Sustainable Nutrition for All in Uganda and Zambia". This is the first in a series of policy and technical briefs from SN4A.

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Photo front page: Nsenyi Primary School, Kasese District, Uganda, © Dennis Onyodi

Photo above: training NAG members in Kasese district © SNV

# Introduction

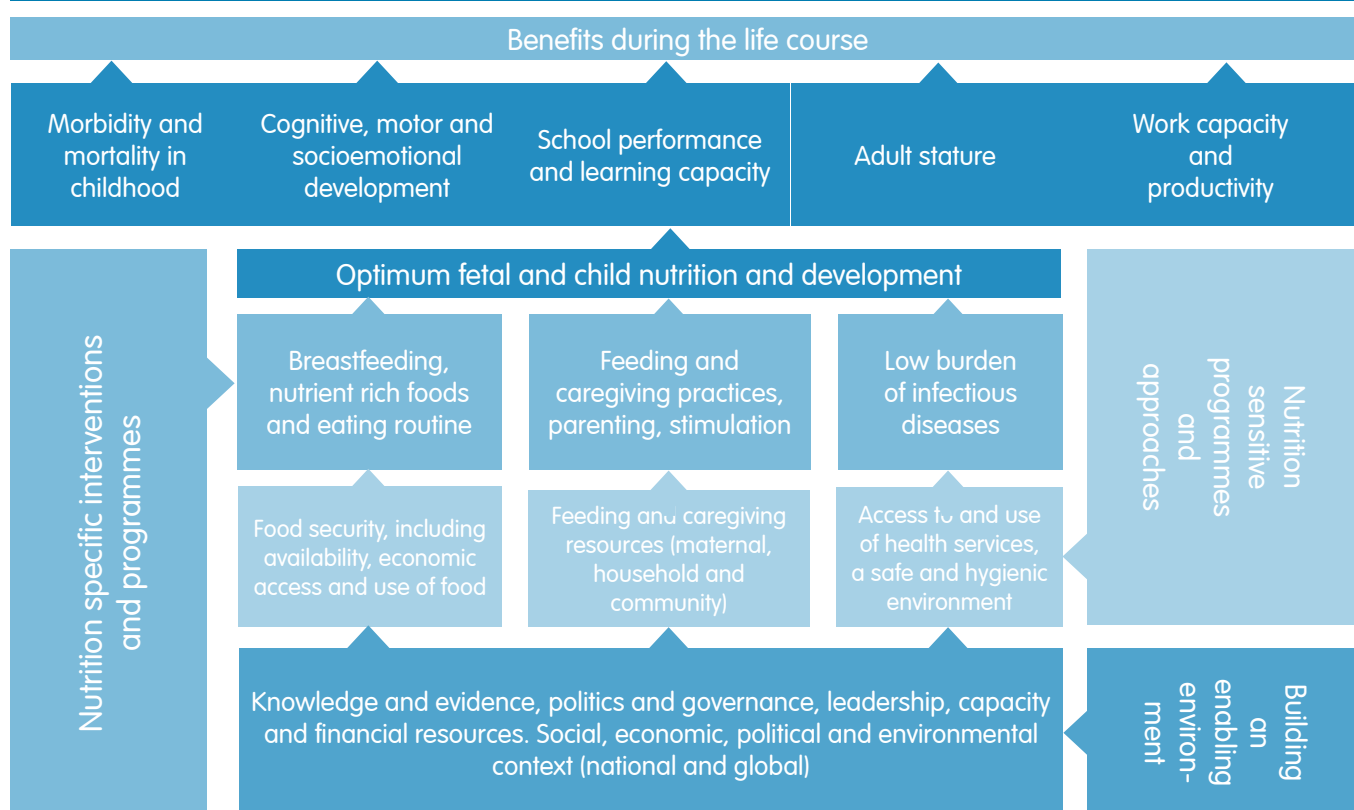
Improved nutrition is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Chronic malnutrition, including stunting, is an important example of a global challenge that spans multiple sectors, including health, agriculture and food systems, water and sanitation, education and gender. Addressing malnutrition requires a strong focus on governance, involving coordinated actions by many actors across sectors and across levels of government.

Recognising the multi-faceted nature of malnutrition, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, in partnership with the Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen UR (CDI) and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) developed and implemented the Sustainable Nutrition for All (SN4A) project in Zambia and Uganda. A central pillar of the programme is to support national, multi-sector policies by developing and

strengthening district and sub-district multi-sector nutrition coordination committees (NCCs). Experiences and learnings from this process are presented in this technical brief.

Few studies have evaluated governance at the sub-national level and its importance for project outcomes. This paper provides insight into how implementation dynamics determine the outcome of nutrition policy initiatives. From the review, we formulate a set of recommendations for improved inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral<sup>a</sup> governance and implementation. The paper highlights the need to build capacity at all levels. No single government, organisation, or intervention can alone end malnutrition, and it is only through working together on all fronts at all governance levels can the 2030 agenda be achieved.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework on the causes of malnutrition (based on UNICEF framework and Black et al., 2013)<sup>2</sup>



a. Multi-sectoral collaboration refers to two or more sectors bringing their separate approaches and resources to address an issue. Inter-sectoral collaboration refers to collective collaboration action amongst the different sectors.

# What is Good Governance and Why is it Needed to End Malnutrition?

In recent years, the political discourse about the challenge of malnutrition has ramped up. The Scaling Up Nutrition movement (SUN) paved the way in 2010 and the Sustainable Development Goals provide a renewed impetus to develop or update multi-sectoral national nutrition policies and strategies<sup>1</sup>.

Addressing malnutrition requires a strong focus on governance, involving coordinated actions by many actors across sectors and levels of government. The 1990 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) conceptual framework opened the dialogue on the respective roles of stakeholders in multi-level and multi-sectoral responses. Starting at the individual level, the framework illustrates that inadequate dietary intake and poor health status are immediate causes. At this level, targeted nutrition specific interventions can make a significant contribution. As reported in the Lancet Series on maternal and child nutrition, even at 90% coverage, the package of 10 nutrition-specific interventions only decreases stunting up to 20%<sup>2</sup>. To make a long term, significant impact, efforts must also be directed to the underlying factors that impact the quality and quantity of food, health services, hygiene, childcare and feeding practices. There is a range of sectors that are important to achieve this, including agriculture and food systems; social protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; and education. Making them nutrition-sensitive and coherent can enhance nutrition interventions. The root causes lie deeper and to eliminate malnutrition, attention must be paid to the overall framework in which country level enabling environments involving political commitment, governance, policy legal frameworks and financing are all key<sup>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 21</sup> (Figure 1).

The Sustainable Nutrition for All (SN4A) approach integrates integrated actions at all governance levels simultaneously. Our approach addresses underlying behavioural, cultural, environmental and governance constraints to improved nutrition through interventions conducted simultaneously in four related pillars - demand creation, triggering and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), improved food supply and governance.

SNV triggers awareness with local governance staff of the need for change. This enables long-term behaviour change that embeds dietary diversity and improved hygiene as a daily practice; realises improved agro-biodiversity; and strengthens multi-sector governance systems to support improved nutrition. Solutions are implemented across communities, engaging all members with a special focus on women and children.

The Right to Adequate Food is a human right. As governments are duty bearers of that right, the project anchors its work in local and national structures to ensure sustainable change and scalability to national level<sup>8</sup>. Within the governance pillar, the SN4A approach supports inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of nutrition related activities. Specifically, SN4A established and/or strengthened district and sub-district level platforms and integrated planning across all line ministries. SN4A is unique, as it combines capacity building of local governance to trigger positive behaviour change on nutrition (and sanitation), with activities in nutrition sensitive agriculture.



# Nutrition Policy and Governance Landscape in Zambia

The economic cost of malnutrition, in terms of lost productivity in Zambia, has been estimated to be as high as €700 million between 2004 and 2013<sup>9</sup>. There is an urgency to capitalise on the current momentum. As an early signatory to the SUN Movement, Zambia has made efforts to address malnutrition, particularly in its policy environment. Zambia's national long term vision (Vision 2030) is to have a well-nourished and healthy population by 2030. This is also echoed in the National Food and Nutrition Policy.

SUN encourages and supports signatories to develop multi-sectoral national nutrition action plans and policies, unified by a commitment to nutrition, involving two or more sectors and led by a coordinating structure or mechanism<sup>3</sup>. In Zambia, as illustrated in figure 2, the coordinating body is the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC), placed within the Ministry of Health. A Special Committee of Permanent Secretaries is chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet with the NFNC as Secretariat. A National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan (NFNSP) covered the period 2011-2015 and an updated plan is currently in progress, along with an institutional strategic plan. Phase II of the First 1,000 Most Critical Days Programme (MCDP) is also being developed, which is a SUN

pooled funding mechanism in support of the NFNSP. Special emphasis has been placed on inter-sectoral collaboration and alignment. Similar to other SUN countries Zambia's efforts are however stifled by operational challenges, funding and technical constraints, and the complexity of implementing multi-sectoral action plans.

Nutrition is often still conceived as a health sector issue and mostly funded through donor contributions. Programming mostly occurs through sectoral ministries and at the local level inter-sectoral coordination is weak<sup>10</sup>. There are still some districts that do not have nutrition coordinating committees and decentralisation of sectors is varied. A multi-sectoral committee was established as part of the Concern Worldwide, Mumbwa Child Development Agency and International Food Policy Research institute project, Realigning agriculture to improve nutrition (RAIN), in Mumbwa.

The RAIN project has strengthened both the technical and strategic capacity of the District Nutrition Coordination Committees (DNCC), with an emphasis on leadership. This structure is being rolled out more broadly in 7 of the 14 '1000 MCDP' pilot districts<sup>11</sup>.



Photo: Bigirwa Yolesi replicating nutrition sensitive agriculture at her home in Kasese district. © SNV

# Nutrition Policy and Governance Landscape in Uganda

In Uganda, the incentive to invest in nutrition is high - every 1,000 shillings invested result in economic benefits at least six times more<sup>12</sup>. Nutrition is incorporated into the Uganda Vision 2040, with stunting as one of the impact indicators. The Second National Development Plan (2015/2016-2019/2020) (NDP II) and the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (2011-2016) (UNAP) signify high level commitment. The UNAP emphasises the need to plan and coordinate multi-sectoral nutrition programming at national, district and community levels and is currently being used as the guiding document to nutrition planning. It places more emphasis on community based initiatives that have been proven to yield cost effective results. The UNAP is extended to 31 December 2017 to allow the finalisation of the multi-sectoral nutrition policy and development of the second Multi-sectoral Nutrition Action Plan.

Under the UNAP, the multi sectoral nutrition is coordinated at three levels; policy, technical and decentralised coordination with defined horizontal and vertical linkages. Policy coordination involves three entities; Policy Coordination Committee, Implementation Steering Committee, and the Nutrition Parliamentary Forum. The Nutrition Secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is responsible for the multi-sectoral nutrition technical coordination. At the national level, the Multi-sectoral Nutrition Technical Coordination Committee is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the OPM, and is composed of representatives from the Ministries of health; gender, labour and social development; finance, planning and economic development; agriculture, animal industry and fisheries; trade, industry and cooperatives; local government; education and sports; public service; National planning Authority, donors and UN agencies. Since the launch of the National Nutrition Planning Guidelines, the OPM has launched a series of UNAP

trainings to orient DNCCs about the nutrition planning process. District and sub-county local governments are responsible for effective service delivery. A persistent challenge is however the integration of nutrition into the existing district plans and formulation of multi-sectoral District Nutrition Action Plans (DNAPs). The UNAP has played an important role in strengthening the enabling environment for nutrition action in Uganda, however the 2011 UNAP gap analysis identified a number of barriers, including weak advocacy at all levels, poor infrastructure, weak coordination and information management systems, limited involvement of communities in nutrition work and low coverage of nutrition services. Poor domestic financing of nutrition actions is also a factor.<sup>3, 5, 13, 14, 15</sup>.

Although the UNAP does not outline the specific roles and responsibilities or benchmarks for DNCC performance, all Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) have received official communications stipulating the DNCCs' responsibilities. This was after they had received official direction to establish DNCCs with a chairperson and Nutrition Focal point. The establishment of DNCC's are still in their infancy and there are marked variations in the way they are operated across different districts. Recognising the challenges, the OPM Nutrition secretariat and the Ministry of Local Government, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with technical support from the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA) and CDI are working to strengthen nutrition leadership and governance at the national and district levels in 10 districts, including in Kasese. Specifically efforts are being made to strengthen DNCC capacity to plan, budget, leverage existing resources for, advocate for, and monitor nutrition activities<sup>15</sup>.

# SN4A: Governance Pillar

SN4A stimulates multi-sectoral collaboration on nutrition. A key pillar of SN4A is to strengthen national governance capacity by developing a coherent district wide approach to service delivery for improved nutrition. District and sub-district (sub-county in Uganda and hub in Zambia) staff are involved in the implementation, reflections, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the approach. The staff, including agriculture, health, community development, are trained to trigger behaviour change and stimulate nutrition-sensitive agriculture. At the district level, SN4A brings together key stakeholders to

develop and implement a unified nutrition action plan with targets for improved nutrition; costed action plans for demand triggering and behavioural change; improved supply of nutrient rich foods; and a structure for implementation, outlining roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. Moving forward, these district level platforms could be used to escalate the discussion and lessons learned to the national level. Although both Uganda and Zambia are SUN countries, with multi-sectoral plans, there are variations in terms of the effectiveness of the structures at the district level.

Figure 2: Illustration of policy cascades in key sectors in Zambia<sup>20</sup>

International level	Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 Agenda					
	Zambia Vision 2030, GRZ 2006					
	Zambia Poverty Reduction Paper , IMF 2007					
	Zambia Sixth National Development Plan, GRZ 2011					
	Nutrition	Agriculture	Health	Education	Social protection	Water and sanitation
National level	SUN Framework for Action 2010	CAADP Agreement	Worth Health Assembly Agreement			
	National Food and Nutrition Policy 2006	National Agriculture Policy 2004 - 2015	National Health Policy 1992	National School Health and Nutrition Policy 2006		
	National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan 2011-2015	MAL Strategic Plan 2013 - 2016	National Health Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016		Social Protection Framework 2013	WASH Framework 2006
	1000 Most Critical Days Programme 2013 - 2015	Agriculture Sector Implementation Plan	Micronutrient Policy 2005 - 2011	School Health and Nutrition Programme Guidelines 2008		National Water and Sanitation Supplies Programmes
District level		National Agriculture Investment Plan 2014				
	Multi-sectoral District Plan	Agriculture Ministry Workplan	MCDMCH - DOH Workplan	Education Ministry Workplan	MCDMCH - DCW/DSP Workplan	Local Government Ministry Workplan

Note: The National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan and the 1000 Most Critical Days Programme are currently being updated.

# Insights from Zambia

In 2016, focus groups were held with the DNCCs and Hub NCCs in the two SN4A project districts in Zambia (Chinsali and Isoka). The DNCC includes members from Government Departments - Health, Community Development, Mother and Child Health, Agriculture, Finance and Planning, NGO's such as World Vision, and Agriculture Groups such as the Zambian National Farmers Union. There are discussions to include the private sector. The heads of department meet quarterly, and resources are involved in implementation activities. The DOA chairs the group.

In Chinsali, there was an existing district committee developed by SUN prior to SN4A, which had a focus on the 1,000 days (maternal and infant nutrition). Such a platform did not exist in Isoka and during the course of the project, key stakeholders were brought together to work on the broader target of improved nutrition for all. Capacity building has taken place in both districts with district committee members directly involved in delivering and monitoring the SN4A project. SNV also works with the SUN Civil Society network and is involved in the policy dialogue at the national level. SN4A will contribute to the evidence pool on nutrition sensitive interventions.

## Insights from Zambia: opportunities

**Multi- and Inter-sectorality:** Multi-sectorality has been embraced with clear support for a district and sub-district level programme of inter-sectoral coordination. Convergence is needed, to make services accessible to vulnerable populations and efforts are being made to work together across sectors. The coordination at the layer below the district level (Hub level) appears to be easier, but also critical, because of its implementation focus at the frontline. As part of the implementation, SN4A created the Hub committee using the school catchment area which coincided with operational areas of health and agriculture. The members frequently work together. At the provincial level, the governance structure is still in development. To ensure coordination of nutrition activities, laterally and vertically, the PNCCs need to be functional.

It was suggested in Isoka to involve other stakeholders,

including the private sector, and possibly other NGOs. As this DNCC is a new structure it is easier to introduce and integrate other sector representation. In Chinsali, this proved to be more difficult as the structure had been developed in line with SUN guidelines and there was little representation from other programmes. Regarding the sectors, the Community Development sector emerged as the anchor of community based inter-sectoral initiatives, however CD officers are not in every community.

**Capacity Building:** There was a general consensus that capacities need to be built at the district and sub-district level, for basic understanding of nutrition and how it is mediated by intra-household dynamics. Members were very supportive of the triggering approach for behaviour change and follow-up activities.

**District Level Nutrition Action Plans:** The districts are developing work plans that support SN4A interventions. The SN4A project will facilitate discussion to integrate the work plans into the next Five Year National Development Strategy.

**Community advocacy:** Communities are change agents in their own right and are not just beneficiaries of programmes. A wider view of advocacy to build social commitment and political accountability is essential for advancing nutrition. Community-led advocacy needs to be developed and strengthened, using key figures in the community. The DNCC can provide a platform. Community knowledge of where to make complaints and how to highlight issues is variable. There is an opportunity to strengthen communities' understanding of their rights to improve demand for better nutrition and accountability from the relevant officials.

**Scaling Up:** How can the local level initiative be scaled up without losing the depth (behaviour change at the household level) that is key to the approach? There was a general consensus and support to upscale the approach involving triggering, to other districts. Members echoed that it was the right response to addressing nutrition issues. The triggering approach is different to other initiatives. At the village level it leverages deeply felt emotional reactions of parents about the future of their



children. The triggering activities facilitate communities to undertake their own appraisal of how their nutrition habits impact their lives, particularly the physical and cognitive development of their children and to understand what they can do to improve their own situation. They formulate their own solutions which are locally available i.e. strengthen year round access to nutritious agricultural food, by increasing household agro-biodiversity, post-harvest handling, local seed banks, as well as market development to generate income for improved food expenditure.

**Experience sharing and monitoring to foster collective learning:** The multi-sectoral approach is meant to generate learning and can help inform the DNCC and the Hub NCC initiative concept. Regular reflections amongst members are needed to do this. The level of reflection at district and hub level is different. At the hub level, the participants are implementers, who are in direct contact with the households. Participants at the district level are the enforcers and coordinators, who implement advocacy and resource mobilisation activities, and integrate nutrition into the routine work of different line departments.

## Insights from Zambia: challenges

**Multi- and Inter-sectorality:** Some districts have a SUN focal point but the structure is still being developed in terms of accounting and administration. The SUN district, Chinsali, had a well designated focal point with responsibility of coordinating planning and financial aspects among the member departments. Initially there were no mechanisms to integrate existing plans and project activities and there was an expectation that SN4A resources would be unconditionally available to the SUN committee for implementing nutrition plans in the district. Initially this created some tension, but subsequently the SN4A project built capacity of the DNCC members for triggering and monitoring activities in the communities. In both Chinsali and Isoka, problems arose

in the inter- and intra-sectoral collaboration, with departments working in siloes.

**Service coverage:** Nutrition services are patchy. Few have been targeted by the 1000 days nutrition programme.

**Financing and Funding:** Issues arose over the pay rate of those implementing the activities. There seems to be a bottleneck in the Nutrition Budget reaching the district for implementation activities.

**Mobilisation:** A lot of time is required and those at the higher level tend to have commitments, which might divert them to other priorities. More work is needed to get to the stage of self-governance and function, including reporting.

**Advocacy:** Multi-sectoral frameworks need to be replicated from national to local level to ensure that there is a reporting line and an advocacy channel. The provincial structures and DNCCs are still in their infancy. Time needs to be invested in constituting and formalising the structure, roles and responsibilities of the Committees at district and sub-district levels. Capacity building, training and involving governance staff in project activities is only part of the process.

**M&E, Data collection:** National data collection on core nutrition indicators is not timely, with the demographic and health survey occurring every few years, making it difficult to track progress and build capacity. Within the SN4A project, DNCC have a responsibility to collate data, which will provide much needed district level data.

Community capacity building and increasing nutrition awareness at household and community level are seen as central to the establishment of local capacities to prevent and combat malnutrition -

Chituwo, B, Minister of Health, Zambian Food and Nutrition Policy

# Insights from Uganda

The Tooro subregion, where SN4A is based in two districts, has the highest stunting rates in the country<sup>16</sup>. SN4A supports sub-counties in the two districts (Kasese and Kyenjojo) to establish Sub-county Nutrition Coordination Committees (SNCC), which are sub-committees to the Sub-county Technical Planning Committees. Efforts are also made to develop the Sub-county Nutrition Action Plans in line with the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan and District Nutrition Action Plans. DNCCs are required to engage SNCC and parishes in their planning processes. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) chairs the DNCC while the sub-county chief chairs the SNCC. The DNCC is an existing forum that has been established in accordance with central government policy. Focus groups were conducted with the DNCC and SNCC members in November 2016 and the following emerged.

## Insights from Uganda: opportunities

**Multi-sectoral approach:** The multi-sectoral approach is strongly recognised by the members- "There is a synergy of efforts, what one sector omits, the other complements. Efforts are combined for results." Another member mentioned that "the village gets to know different professionals. Originally nutrition was the role of health." There is increased transparency because sectors are aware of what other sectors are doing. Working inter-sectorally on nutrition is a relatively new approach for local governments who rely mostly on implementation partners to implement nutrition activities, largely because there is no budget from the central government. At the district level there is a need to strengthen communication between the DNCCs and the SNCCs. Planning across sectors is critical. Others commented that "Nutrition was historically in the health department, as a subject nutrition however required the attention of food, agronomy, education etc.", "We need to share more - of plans and budgets - district may not know what SNV is doing. SNV may not know what others are doing" and "Nutrition is a process, not an event, hence we need different approaches." The SN4A activities were implemented well because of the 'good team work', and the participatory community approach which was 'relevant' and 'capitalised on the local knowledge'.

**Nutrition Action Plan:** The District Nutrition Action Plan

(DNAP) for Kasese was approved, and is now a working document that guides the implementation of nutrition activities in the district. The Kyenjojo DNAP was officially approved by the District Council in April 2017. However further work is needed to integrate it into annual, quarterly and monthly plans. The Kisinga SNCC has included the project in its 2015-2016 budget and in the five year development plan 2016/2017-2020/2021.

**Coordination of stakeholders:** The DNCC provides a platform for multi-sectoral stakeholders to share information, and harmonise activities in the district. This will also enable local governments to learn what strategies works best when collaborating across the sectors, what challenges can arise and how best to address them. Planned activities must be coordinated, coherent and nutrition-sensitive. Another opportunity to raise the profile of nutrition is to tap into other relevant multi-sectoral platforms. Learning and reflection tools could be utilised to report back on progress on district nutrition plans from SN4A and other development partners.

**Capacity strengthening to implement triggering activities:** District members were empowered to implement triggering activities in the communities, and thereby encourage individuals to address their own nutrition challenges. Each village has developed a village Nutrition Action Plan and democratically selected Village Nutrition Action Group (VNAG) members to foster adoption at the household level. Behaviour change for improved nutrition, including the triggering, are to be included in the DNAPs. There is a need for further capacity building of district staff in inter-sectoral, advocacy and monitoring activities.

**Reach:** SN4A provides a structure, through a VNAG to go beyond the district and subcounty level and reach households in the community. To institutionalise this, the structure should be included in the district action plan.

**Advocacy and resource mobilization:** DNCC should conduct advocacy to raise awareness among leadership and mobilise resources at the local level. This is critical to ensure sustainability of nutrition actions.

**Other actors:** The DNCC could also engage more directly with political, religious and cultural leaders, because they also play critical roles in advocacy and behaviour change communication (BCC) for nutrition.

## Insights from Uganda: challenges

**Multi-sectoral approach:** More work is needed between coordination at the different layers, from national to sub-county. The DNCC's have a structure in place, and moving forward, there needs to be system in place to ensure the subcounty structures are part of the district coordination framework. There is a need to build capacity in DNCC members in appraising and addressing nutrition issues. Other department heads who are not DNCC members but are responsible for resource allocation and priority setting need to be sensitised. DNCCs should be encouraged to draft nutrition action plans that are aligned with sector development plans to leverage resources.

**Financing and Funds:** It was highlighted that it can be difficult to pool resources for coordination services. However, it is also important to identify ongoing activities or workplans that are nutrition-related and then identify the existing funding gaps. The Chief Financial Officers are not on many boards. Funds are predominantly donor sourced and the district can be restricted in terms of what nutrition activities it can do. The finance department needs to be included in the nutrition dialogue. The finances of respective departments are not centralised. Sub-counties make their budgets which are approved by the Sub-County Council and the sub-county budgets feed into the district budgets. The SNCC activities are budgeted for at sub-county level, however it is not clear if all SNCC requests are approved.

**Mobilisation:** It can be difficult to mobilise the implement-

ers all at once. Additionally time constraints, core activities and other commitments may pull DNCC members from committee attendance and responsibilities. Some departments in sectors still prefer to work in the siloes.

## Monitoring, evaluation and documentation of interventions to inform policy and programming:

It was flagged that a systematic and harmonized M&E tool is needed, with clarity on the key indicators and tools. This should be integrated into the department plans, as agriculture indicators are different to WASH etc. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development have developed an indicator system (Output Budgeting Tool (OBT)) with standard indicators monitored on a quarterly basis. However, nutrition is not included and is perceived as added work, hence support is needed to work with the Heads of Departments to review how nutrition relates to items that are already in their output budgeting. The monitoring in SN4A should be undertaken by the sector departments and compiled into regular reports that are raised to the national level.

**Leadership:** "Strong leadership in a multi- sectoral approach is needed." In 2012 USAID worked with the OPM to strengthen decentralisation as part of the Community Connector Project. This USAID project was implemented in Kasese as well as other districts. Districts' members were sensitised on the multi-sectoral nutrition approach and how to coordinate business. When the project came to an end, there was little follow-up at the national level. "We need to improve on the nutrition governance- we need those higher up to be nutrition aware." There is however strong endorsement by the OPM, which issues a letter directing districts to establish DNCCs.

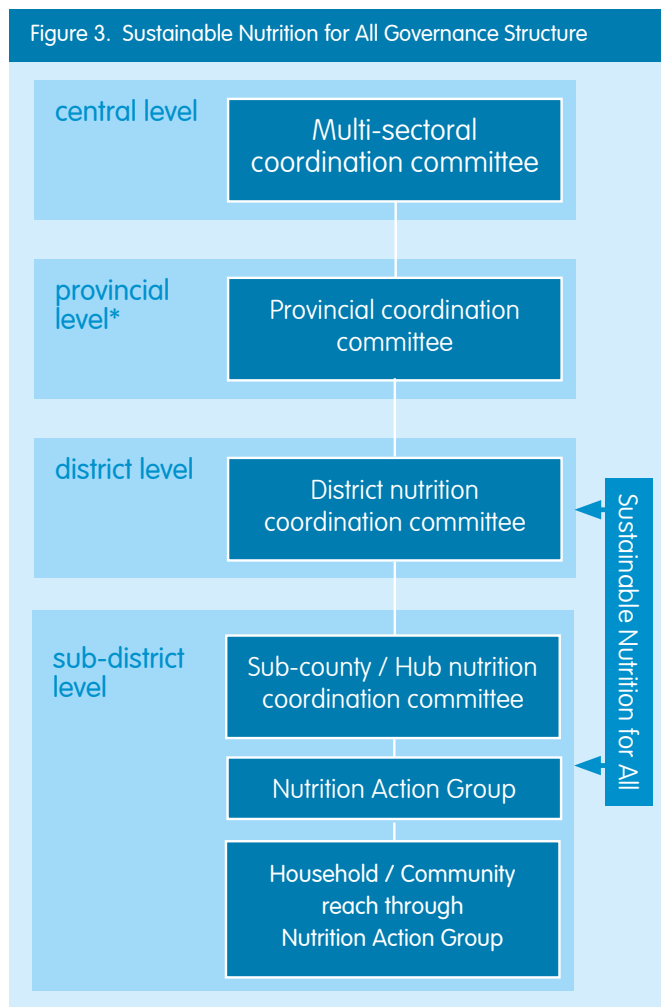


# Improving Governance Structures for Improved Nutrition

Successful multi-sectoral nutrition programmes require strong coordination, implementation and accountability mechanisms at various level of governance - national, provincial, district and sub-district (sub-county/hub). Good governance is an important ingredient to successfully scale up a country's multi-sectoral nutrition plan. It entails sustained political commitment. Nutrition programs must be able to sustain changes in national leadership and political and socioeconomic crises. Strong political commitment is essential, ideally from the executive branch such as the OPM, which has the power to convene several ministries. Although DNCCs, SNCCs/ Hub NCCs have been created and progress has been made in terms of capacity building of its members in SN4A and other nutrition activities, a significant gap still

remains between national policies and local governance. Working across sectors requires a different set of strategies and skills, including the ability and authority to coordinate between sectors. Capacities and skills should not only be technical in nature but also strategic, particularly in how to work across a range of sectors with different stakeholders. Adequate funding is the glue that holds vertical and horizontal implementation of nutrition policies. Inter-sectoral coordination needs leadership and involves time, energy, funds and skills and managing these requires resources. It also takes time to build alliances and systems to support a broad-based effort in addressing malnutrition. This was identified in establishing the DNCCs and SNCCs<sup>3, 17, 18</sup>.

Community involvement can create greater local accountability, and in turn can improve transparency<sup>19</sup>. There is an opportunity to ensure accountability for nutrition related service coverage, particularly to the most vulnerable or hard to reach. Strengthening communities' understanding of their rights and of commitments made would make their voice more powerful and demand for better nutrition<sup>10,20</sup>. When civil society groups have the capacity to produce, analyse and disseminate credible data, they can make undernutrition problems visible and improve the scope and quality of service delivery<sup>10</sup>.



\* Provinces do not apply to the SN4A in Uganda.

# Policy Recommendations

Moving forward, there are opportunities to align the governance at central and local levels in Uganda and Zambia. Given our experience in contributing to the establishment and strengthening of district and sub-district level platforms for improved nutrition, SNV and the SN4A partners recommend that governments:

## Provide strong leadership and commitment to multi-sectoral action to address malnutrition

This involves establishing and sustaining an executive coordinating body, with multi-sectoral credibility and authority to facilitate mobilising and resourcing power. In Uganda, for example, the convening power is at the Office of the Prime Minister.

## Support advocacy opportunities from agenda setting to formulation of strategies and guidelines in line with the SDG's, SUN and national development plans

High-level government officials play a critical role by coordinating actions across ministries and government offices, channelling donor and civil society efforts, and by stressing the importance of nutrition in the poverty reduction agenda.

## Ensure that the multi-sectoral platforms are replicated and aligned from national to subnational level to ensure community reach, especially of the most vulnerable households

In Uganda and Zambia, strong efforts are made to develop and strengthen the NCCs. Gaps exist at the provincial, district and sub-district levels. SN4A supported efforts to develop and strengthen the district and sub-district (SNCC in Uganda and Hub NCC in Zambia). National Governments need to support the committees in their capacity to plan, coordinate, implement and monitor nutrition services.

## Build capacity including human and institutional capacity

Capacity strengthening in nutrition leadership and governance is needed at all levels. At the district level, key skills required include planning, advocacy, support supervision and M&E. At the sub-district level, technical and facilitation skills are particularly important, and sectors need to have additional training on nutrition implementation. In SN4A, triggering and sensitisation to influence intra-household dynamics for positive behaviour change in nutrition, in parallel to the other SN4A pillars has proved to be positive.

We are developing the National Nutrition Policy and mechanisms to institutionalise nutrition in the country but we have been grappling with finding the right approach to use to extend the message on poor nutrition and stunting to the communities at the village level. Today as I observed the triggering of communities on nutrition by the SNV sustainable nutrition for all project I got the answers that I need to form and operationalise the village nutrition plan for Uganda. I am going to advocate for the scaling up of the SN4A model to other parts of the country

Boaz Musiimenta, Principal Policy Analyst and SUN Focal person, Office of the Prime Minister.

### Improve monitoring and evaluation at the sub-national level, including disaggregated nutrition data, and monitoring of nutrition activities embedded in district plans

There is a lack of disaggregated nutrition data. Current interventions should inform the data pool and robust nutrition M&E frameworks should be prioritised, developed and integrated into governance structures so that progress can be tracked and issues can be addressed. Opportunities exist to draw in local experience, and implementation experience, such as SN4A, to help shape and inform future policy and programming. Empowering DNCCs to use data in planning is critical since 'they are the custodians of nutrition planning at the district level.'<sup>5, 14</sup> Efforts should be made to include nutrition in the standard indicators, for example in the Output Budgeting Tool developed by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Uganda.

### Develop Accountability Mechanisms

Accountability is needed at all levels, where stakeholders have ownership and responsibility to fulfil nutrition duties.

### Improve additional domestic funding for multi-sectoral nutrition approaches and create financial mechanisms to protect and earmark nutrition funding within line departments, and ensure that it is effectively allocated

DNCCs and SNCCs/Hub NCCs are not adequately funded. There is insufficient availability of funding for nutrition programmes, including the different modalities to allocate, administer and monitor the use of funds, particularly in the long term. Need to advocate for decentralised budgets, channelled through one funding mechanism rather than piece-meal resources as funding is the glue that holds together the incentives for inter-sectoral cooperation and facilitates implementation of policy interventions<sup>4,10</sup>.

### Provide support to local governance and civil society groups to develop social accountability mechanisms

Stunting is invisible in the community. Strengthening communities' understanding of their rights along with an increased understanding of the prevalence of undernutrition in their villages would strengthen their voices thereby creating demand for better quality nutrition services.

### Leverage existing resources and work with, for example teachers and local leaders, to plan, implement, monitor and coordinate nutrition interventions at community and household level



Photo: Nyabuharwa sub county office, Kyenjojo district (Uganda); © Lisanne Oonk/KIT

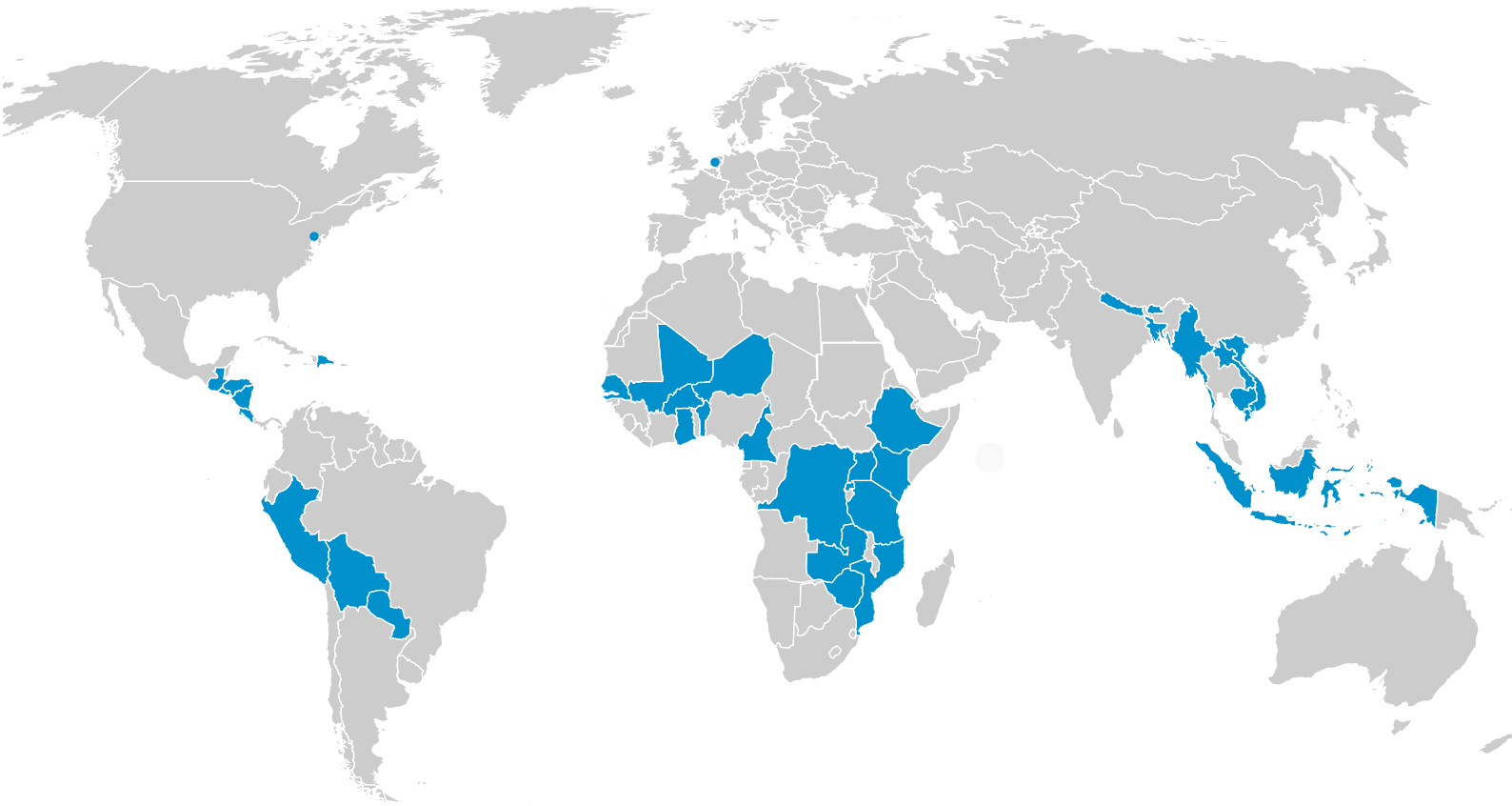


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