

# The Power of Multi-sectoral Governance to Address Malnutrition

Insights from Sustainable Nutrition for All in Uganda and Zambia

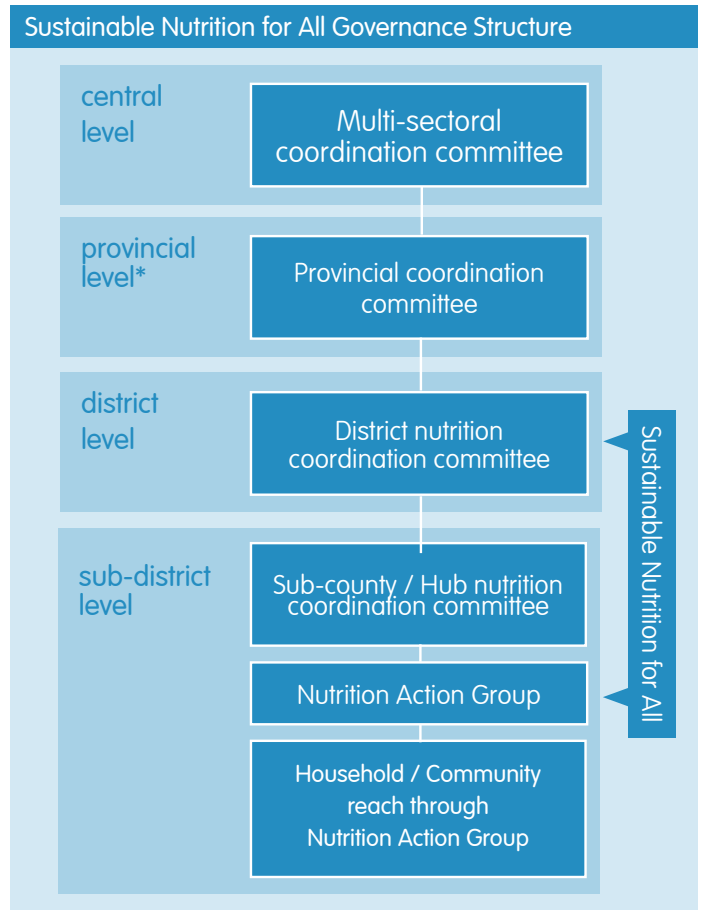
## SUMMARY



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 multifaceted 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-sectoral policies by developing and strengthening district and sub-district multi-sectoral nutrition coordination committees (NCCs). Experiences and learnings from this process 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”.

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 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.



\*Province level is not applicable to 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.

## **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. 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.

## **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 front page: Nsenyi Primary School, Kasese District (Uganda), © Dennis Onyodi/SNV

photo back page: a triggering session in Nyakaina, Kasese district (Uganda), © Lisanne Oonk/KIT

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