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USAID Advancing Nutrition Tanzania

Political Leader Takes Action for Nutrition

A visit by the Minister of State puts a spotlight on nutrition priorities ahead of budget allocations

From August 18–21, 2020, Tanzania’s Minister of State, the Honorable Jenista Mhagama, joined a USAID Advancing Nutrition team and other nutrition stakeholders on a journey to Iringa and Ruvuma regions. She took part in a high-level supportive supervision visit to observe how nutrition activities are carried out in communities and health facilities. The two regions have some of the highest rates of malnutrition in the country. Minister of State Mhagama’s visit put a focus on nutrition as a priority for the local government. The nutrition activities in Iringa and Ruvuma regions are part of Tanzania’s National Multi-sectoral Nutrition Action Plan (NMNAP) (2016–2021), which aims to address the unacceptably high levels of malnutrition using a multi-sectoral approach.



At Tosamaganga Hospital in Iringa, Minister of State Mhagama learns how the hospital manages care of acutely malnourished children. Photo credit: Nyamagori, PMO.

Making Nutrition a Funding Priority

In each region, regional nutrition officers briefed the team on progress and challenges of their nutrition activities. Minister of State Mhagama learned how district councils are making progress in budgeting and disbursement of nutrition funding. Under a national agreement signed by the Vice President in 2017, district councils must commit 1,000 Tsh for each child in a district. Regional representatives also noted specific challenges with this agreement, including how districts reported receiving disbursements of only 50–70 percent of the expected amounts due to limited funding and the low priority of nutrition.

Minister of State Mhagama called on regional and district leadership to ensure that council’s budget and disburse 100 percent of the required funding for nutrition activities. In her remarks, she emphasized that, *“if I’m elected again, nutrition will continue to be my priority, I will advocate and ensure accountability in both budgeting, disbursement, and implementation of nutrition activities; we need a well-nourished nation to realize our country vision.”*

Engaging Communities and Facilities

In both Iringa and Ruvuma regions, Minister of State Mhagama participated in village health and nutrition days to observe how different sectors and community groups engage in assessing and managing nutrition-related issues. The Minister of State applauded the work of community health workers, who play a major role in promoting positive nutrition behaviors through nutrition activities in both households and health facilities.

In each village, Minister of State Mhagama implored communities to prioritize child wellbeing and good nutrition status and advocated for the engagement of men and boys in health and nutrition issues. In her remarks, she said *“for a healthier family, both men and women should cooperate to ensure children receive good care, balanced food, and all*



The Minister of State talks to a caregiver at Tosamaganga Hospital in Iringa region. Photo credit: Nyamagori, PMO.

essential services for them to thrive. Every parent needs to be accountable; nutrition should be everyone’s business starting at household level.”

In Iringa region, the Minister of State visited Tosamaganga Hospital to see how they carry out integrated management of acute malnutrition for children. Speaking to hospital staff and patients, she strongly encouraged caregivers with severely malnourished children to adhere to health and nutrition advice provided by health care workers to improve health outcomes.

Meaningful Impact

As a result of the visit, Minister of State Mhagama implored the President’s Office Regional Administration and Local Government to lead an ongoing dialogue on nutrition issues—both regarding progress and challenges—in each village’s quarterly meeting. Her advocacy for sufficient budget allocation and timely disbursement of funds for high-quality nutrition services was paramount given that the government planning and budgeting process began soon after her visit.

The Minister of State’s participation in on-the-ground nutrition activities contributed to USAID Advancing Nutrition’s key objective of strengthening the Prime Minister’s Office’s (PMO) capacity to facilitate the integration of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific components of the NMNAP across key line ministries.

During the 2019 Joint Multi-sectoral Nutrition Review Meeting, the Prime Minister requested this visit as a way of engaging high-level government leaders in the implementation of NMNAP. The visit is key to USAID Advancing Nutrition’s work in Tanzania as learnings from it will inform priorities for the development of the second iteration of the NMNAP, and the high-level government leaders who participate in future visits will be able to provide inputs into the process. USAID Advancing Nutrition funded the high-level supportive supervision visit, which they carried out in collaboration with the PMO.



The Minister of State observes a cooking area for children with severe malnutrition at Tosamaganga Hospital in Iringa region. Photo credit: Nyamagori, PMO.



USAID ADVANCING NUTRITION

Implemented by:
JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.
2733 Crystal Drive
4th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202

Phone: 703-528-7474
Email: info@advancingnutrition.org
Web: advancingnutrition.org

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