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USAID Advancing Nutrition

PROJECT YEAR 4 IN REVIEW

October 1, 2021–September 30, 2022



About USAID Advancing Nutrition

USAID Advancing Nutrition is the Agency's flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project, led by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI), and a diverse group of experienced partners. Launched in September 2018, USAID Advancing Nutrition implements nutrition interventions across sectors and disciplines for USAID and its partners. The project's multi-sectoral approach draws together global nutrition experience to design, implement, and evaluate programs that address the root causes of malnutrition. Committed to using a systems approach, USAID Advancing Nutrition strives to sustain positive outcomes by building local capacity, supporting behavior change, and strengthening the enabling environment to save lives, improve health, build resilience, increase economic productivity, and advance development.

Disclaimer

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As USAID Advancing Nutrition’s fourth project year (PY) began in October 2021, delegates from 183 countries at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) called for urgent action at scale to address climate change, COVID-19, and conflict—the three Cs threatening recent progress in mitigating hunger, food security, and undernutrition. On the heels of UNFSS, the global Nutrition for Growth Summit convened stakeholders in December 2021 to announce financial, policy, program, and business commitments to address malnutrition, the underlying cause of nearly half of all child deaths under five years. Recognizing that less than 1 percent of global foreign aid is spent on nutrition, donor governments and multilateral institutions pledged more than US\$27 billion at the Summit, which also served as the culmination of the Nutrition for Growth Year of Action.

As discussions at these high-level events show, our work must build resilience, strengthen local capacities, and fight inequities in both food and health systems to sustainably reduce malnutrition around the globe. USAID Advancing Nutrition’s efforts to improve nutrition are grounded in the depth and breadth of its learning to ensure—

- Food systems improve diets and health systems prevent and treat malnutrition.
- Communities build resilience in contexts of chronic food insecurity.
- Governments, private sector actors, and communities come together to identify, test, and share improved health and consumption practices.
- Programs integrate components of nurturing care, such as responsive caregiving and opportunities for early learning, into nutrition interventions.

To accomplish this, USAID Advancing Nutrition conducts and shares research to build and apply evidence-based approaches. We also develop and adapt program design, implementation, and measurement guidance, working directly with partners, communities, and government stakeholders. Key to this is our role as a convener to advance multi-sectoral solutions to complex problems while also strengthening the capacity of public, private, and nongovernmental actors to strengthen food and health systems for nutrition. Finally, our work to influence and assist government stakeholders in planning, developing, financing, and carrying out multi-sectoral nutrition policies is key to sustaining the outputs and outcomes from our efforts.

Figure 1. Fostering Sustained Nutrition Action in PY4



In addition to participating in more than 30 global technical working groups and communities of practice, we brought organizations, businesses, and individuals together in all **12 of our country programs** through—

- multi-sectoral nutrition coordination and planning
- high level consultations to translate policy into action
- competency training of frontline workers and their supervisors
- technical assistance across a range of stakeholders
- quantitative and qualitative research
- establishment and strengthening of a multi-sectoral nutrition surveillance network
- program design workshops.

Using a range of capacity strengthening approaches, we trained more than 8,700 people to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate nutrition programming; at least 7 of our country offices worked directly with governments to influence policy, planning, and financing of multi-sectoral nutrition actions. Following are a few highlights from the year that illustrate this work.

Strengthening Nutrition Governance through Planning, Policy, and Finance in Tanzania, Ghana, and Uganda

By providing targeted technical assistance to key stakeholders, we facilitated, coordinated, and tracked multi-sectoral progress in achieving national nutrition objectives. For example, in PY4, we continued to work with the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) of Tanzania to launch the second National Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan, which includes a results and accountability framework. We also collaborated with the PMO on an accompanying Resource Mobilization Strategy laying out financing options for all five years of implementation.

In Northern Ghana, USAID Advancing Nutrition supported 17 districts to integrate food security and nutrition activities into their 2022–2025 medium-term development plans, ensuring local governments prioritize food security and nutrition beyond the life of the project. USAID Advancing Nutrition Ghana supported

these districts to develop their financing strategies, tools, and approaches, which all districts in the country can now adapt and use. Working with both national and district-level government structures and staff across technical ministries/departments, we also began a consultative process with the National Development Planning Commission responsible for multi-sectoral coordination of nutrition activities.

We are supporting the Government of Uganda in implementing its national program of industrial fortification of staple grains, oil and fats, and salt. Working under the National Working Group on Food Fortification, we assessed and highlighted evidence gaps and challenges to sustaining Uganda’s fortification program while building leadership and strengthening governance. We are collaborating with the National Working Group to strengthen regulatory enforcement, leadership, food industry support, and demand creation with the aim of incorporating these activities into the national food fortification strategy to strengthen future country-driven fortification efforts.

We are also collaborating closely with private sector, research, governmental, and nongovernmental partners in Honduras to strengthen the enabling environment for improving large-scale food fortification, a key government priority.

Strengthening the Nutrition Capacity of Local Stakeholders in Kenya, Burkina Faso, and Beyond

In our fourth project year, we provided 379 organizations with training and technical assistance to design, implement, and monitor nutrition programs. Our **New Partnerships Initiative (NPI)** grantees in Kenya and Burkina Faso developed comprehensive capacity strengthening plans and completed work plans to address gaps in nutrition service delivery in their communities while also building skills among staff in nutrition technical areas (e.g., social and behavior change [SBC]) as well as in budget, finance, and operations. We also provided support to these groups, government departments, and organizations:

- **Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre:** Strengthened monitoring, evaluation, and research skills and developed a media strategy for raising awareness of nutrition best practices among groups vulnerable to undernutrition
- **ADPP, a local nongovernmental organization in Mozambique:** Improved program planning, design, and management, and expanded quality nutrition services through the health system and in communities
- **Community health workers in Kenya:** Conducted competency-guided SBC assessments using our suite of tools
- **SOS Sahel, one of our NPI grantees in Burkina Faso:** Developed a competency-guided mentorship program for improved SBC programming
- **Departments of health and agriculture in Kakamega, Kisumu, and Kitui Counties in Kenya:** Developed capacity strengthening plans for multi-sectoral nutrition
- **At least 10 civil society organizations in Kenya:** Appraised, documented, and shared their contributions to improved nutrition service delivery in their communities, which included vitamin A supplementation, growth monitoring and promotion referrals, school feeding programs in urban and peri-urban settlements, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Our capacity-strengthening webinar series featured local successes and challenges from Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya in using nutrition SBC competencies to guide and sustain programming. We also defined and applied nutrition competencies to review pre-service training for nurses and similar cadres in Bangladesh, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ghana, and the Kyrgyz Republic, providing countries with an indication of which nutrition-related pre-service curriculum components Ministries of Health should consider for revision. Additionally, our training of trainers to facilitate use of the nutrition-sensitive agriculture design guide included participants from six countries who engage in our community of practice, sharing best

practices in using and adapting the guide across a range of contexts.

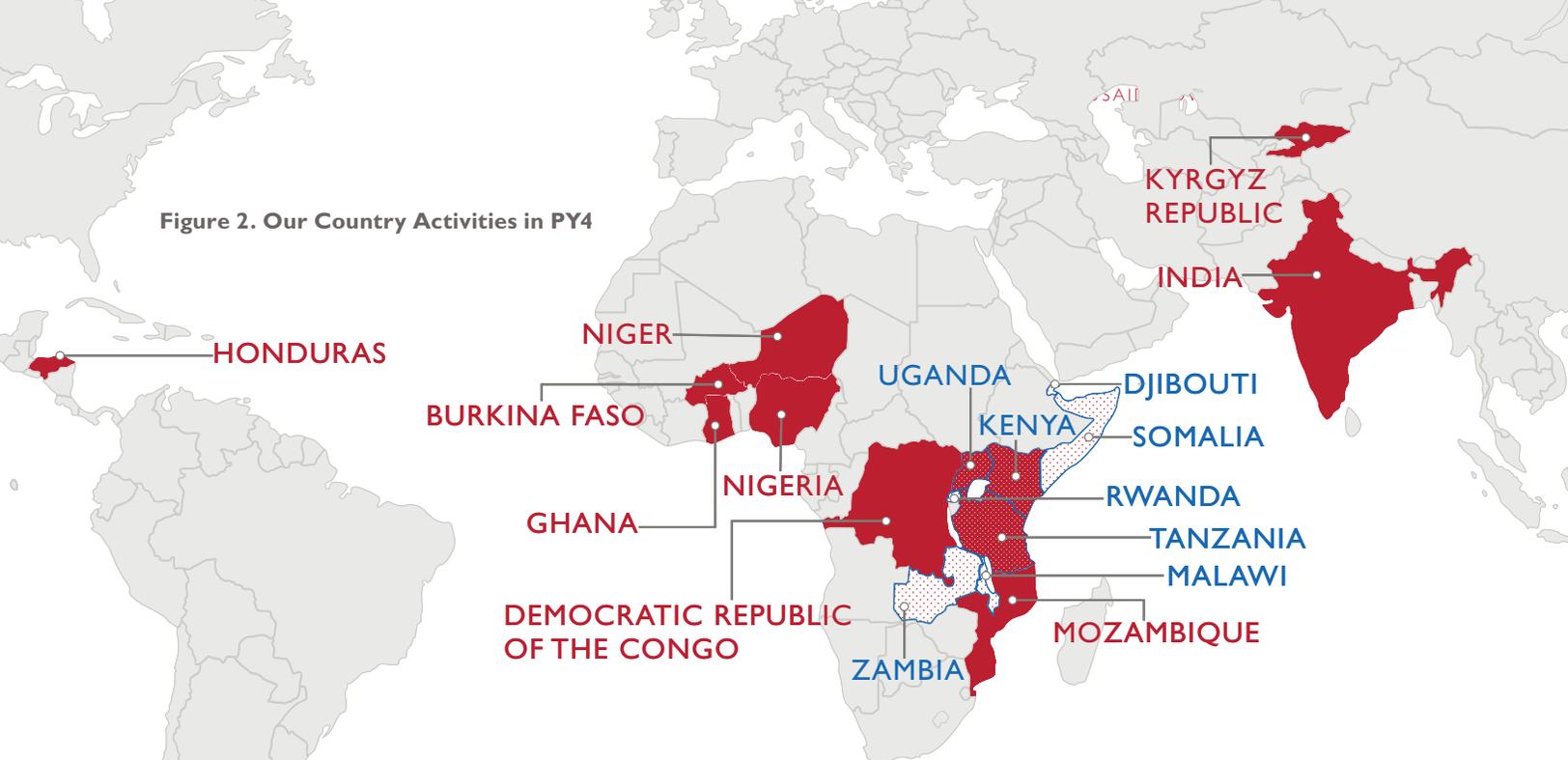
Convening and Catalyzing Nutrition Action at National and Global Levels

PY4 provided opportunities to expand our coverage and reach. We facilitated the strengthening of health, food, and education systems and services to support women of reproductive age, children under five years of age, and other groups vulnerable to malnutrition. Strengthened systems improve access to age- and context-appropriate care and services and increase consumption of healthy diets, including micronutrient-rich foods. Bringing the right stakeholders together helps catalyze sustainable action.

For example, USAID Advancing Nutrition and the USAID Resilience Learning Activity designed and facilitated a hybrid workshop to review the learning generated to date by the Nawiri program, a Resilience Food Security Activity in Kenya, and consider the implications for activity design and implementation plans.

Since June 2020, USAID Advancing Nutrition has convened the Agile Core Team for Nutrition Monitoring, a collaboration with UNICEF, USAID, and the World Health Organization (WHO). This group responds to the information and planning needs of the global nutrition community to ensure consolidated nutrition monitoring during global shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To that end, we helped to facilitate the development of an interactive analytical framework that shows the multifaceted ways the COVID-19 pandemic can influence nutrition outcomes, from impacts on health service delivery to education and social protection systems, and subsequently shared the tool through a well-attended webinar. These are just three examples of how we convene stakeholders to catalyze nutrition action. The examples also illustrate how our country portfolio continued to expand in breadth and depth in PY4. Highlights of our country work follow.

Figure 2. Our Country Activities in PY4



 **HONDURAS**

Our work supports the government to strengthen systems that deliver nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions to reduce malnutrition among households and children under five.

 **BURKINA FASO**

To improve regional nutritional outcomes, we support the national government and key stakeholders to improve results-based planning and strengthen data-driven nutrition interventions.

 **GHANA**

We advance the national government's efforts to improve district planning for equitable delivery of services that improve nutrition, household resilience, and early childhood development.

 **NIGER**

We strengthen micronutrient supplement delivery systems and treatment services to reduce anemia and vitamin A deficiency among women of reproductive age, adolescents, and children under five.

 **NIGERIA**

We provide technical support to the government and partners and generate evidence to enhance multi-sectoral nutrition programming.

 **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

We partner with the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance to document learning on coordination and collaboration among nutrition actors working along the continuum of care for the management of wasting.

 **UGANDA**

We help the government reduce micronutrient deficiencies by strengthening compliance with food fortification standards, enforcement, and monitoring.

 **KENYA**

At the national and sub-national levels, we strengthen stakeholders' capacity to advocate for improved nutrition among Kenya's most vulnerable populations.

 **TANZANIA**

We work with the national government to better plan and coordinate multi-sectoral nutrition programs.

 **MOZAMBIQUE**

We assist the national and Nampula Province governments to improve the nutrition of pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls, and children under two.

 **INDIA**

We address malnutrition among socio-economically disadvantaged families in Assam who are negatively impacted by COVID-19 and create knowledge exchange platforms on nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

 **KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

We improve the nutritional status of women of reproductive age and children under five with a focus on the 1,000-day window of opportunity.

We partner with USAID East Africa, through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, to strengthen regional collaboration on nutrition surveillance through the **Learning Network on Nutrition Surveillance (LeNNS)**. The dotted countries (labeled with blue text) indicate member countries; countries delineated with red dots are only LeNNS members while those with white dots also have a USAID Advancing Nutrition presence in country.

 **LENNs MEMBER COUNTRIES**

 **LENNs MEMBERS AND USAID ADVANCING NUTRITION**

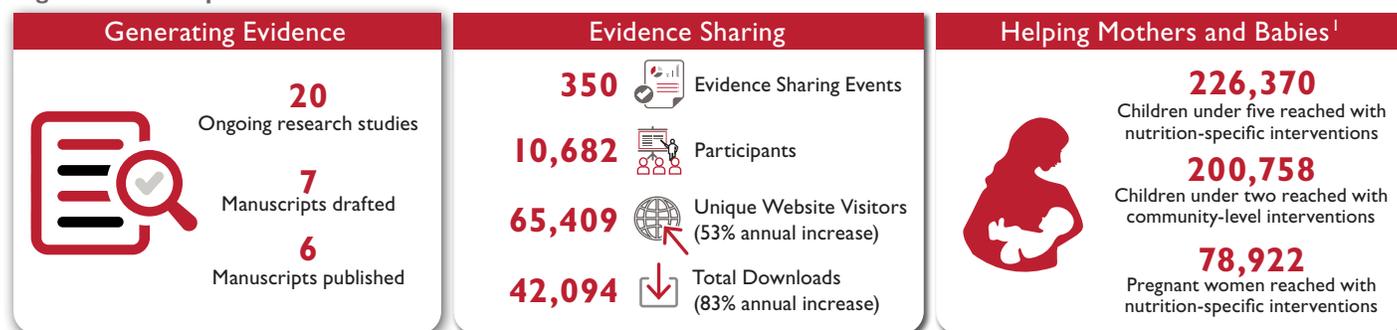
Our efforts extend from evidence generation and dissemination to the delivery of nutrition-specific interventions for pregnant and lactating women, children under two years of age, and family members playing

important caregiving and support roles. A dashboard of our country impact and reach in our fourth project year follows, along with a few additional technical highlights from our global work.

Figure 3. A Snapshot of Our Country Work in PY4



Figure 4. Our Impact in PY4



TECHNICAL AREA HIGHLIGHTS

Infant and Young Child Feeding and Nutrition Counseling

More than 820,000 deaths² among children under age five could be prevented worldwide annually if all children were optimally breastfed. In PY4, we published important **research** using data from Bangladesh, Viet Nam, and Nigeria comparing methods to accurately measure exclusive breastfeeding that notes differences in prevalence estimates. Additionally, we shared research and learning to help countries pursue the UNICEF and WHO-defined standards for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) based on examples from the Kyrgyz Republic and Malawi; our **study** found strong policy environments and mechanisms with the potential to scale up and sustain BFHI in both countries. The Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Image Bank expanded and now includes training videos for the global nutrition community. In addition, our work to promote breastfeeding in the Kyrgyz Republic came to life through a USAID Exposure feature that was one of the Agency's most read stories in 2022. We also convened and facilitated expert consultations to—

- **Share knowledge and learning** among the Global Financing Facility, UNICEF, and WHO on growth monitoring and promotion.
- Develop and share better practices for promoting **responsive care and early learning** with country stakeholders in Mozambique, Ghana, and the Kyrgyz Republic along with adapting and testing those

practices for integration into UNICEF's IYCF counseling cards package.

- Complete a review of programs supporting nutritional care of children with disabilities and feeding difficulties and develop a **resource collection** to support inclusive programming.
- Review, collect, consolidate, and share practical resources, evidence, guidance, and learning to stimulate discussion across USAID to help **improve** the quality of nutrition counseling globally.

Wasting Prevention and Treatment

Climate change, conflict, and COVID-19 have created increased urgency to address wasting among children in communities vulnerable to crises and undernutrition. In PY4, USAID Advancing Nutrition worked with a range of stakeholders to—

- Share lessons learned and best practices for how emergency and development actors can more effectively **coordinate and collaborate** with government, service providers, and communities in the DRC to prevent and manage wasting. We are also learning from and documenting experiences with blanket supplementary feeding, a key approach to support food insecure households and prevent wasting in children under five, especially when food availability may be insufficient.
- Contribute to the evidence base for improving the effectiveness and scalability of **small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements**, a fortified

1. These numbers include an additional 6,476 children reached through the Center on Children in Adversity-funded Responsive Care and Early Learning Activity.

2. Victora, C.G., R. Bahl, A.J.D. Barros, G.V.A. França, S. Horton, J. Krasavec, S. Murch, et al. 2016. "Breastfeeding in the 21st Century: Epidemiology, Mechanisms, and Lifelong Effect". *Lancet*. 387(10017):475-90. doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01024-7

product used to fill key nutrient gaps during the complementary feeding period, pregnancy, and lactation that has been shown to effectively reduce stunting, wasting, anemia, and mortality among children ages 6–24 months in certain contexts.

- Convene USAID stakeholders to map a way forward for supporting wasting prevention and treatment programming across and among sectors in varying country contexts and capacities.

Healthy Diets

In PY4, we continued our collaboration with the Global Diet Quality Project and the WHO/UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring to contribute to **improved measurement of food consumption and diets**, including determining how best to adapt approaches for collecting food consumption data at the national level for sub-national use. We also worked across USAID, project countries, and technical teams to advance a comprehensive **learning agenda focused on women’s diets**. This learning helps facilitate understanding of the importance of women’s diets, not only when they are pregnant or lactating. USAID Advancing Nutrition is also collaborating with USAID and other implementing partners to develop and test guidance to—

- Increase **consumer demand** for safe and nutritious foods.
- Assess **market-based food environments** to design and measure activities that enhance diets and nutrition.
- Design and implement **food-processing activities** for improved diets and nutrition.
- Select **diet assessment tools** according to context and program purpose.
- Identify and increase adoption of **key behaviors** to improve nutrition outcomes using a food systems lens.

Micronutrients and Anemia

Micronutrient deficiencies continue to be a focus of our collaborative research agenda and country work. In addition to supporting large-scale food fortification

efficacy in Uganda and Honduras, we are strengthening government and community health worker capacity to increase effective coverage of iron-folic acid and vitamin A supplementation in Niger. We are also working to improve micronutrient supplementation and dietary consumption among women of reproductive age, adolescents, and children under five within communities in Niger. Key highlights from work completed with various stakeholder in PY4 include—

- Collaborate with members of the Micronutrient Forum’s Global Micronutrient Deficiencies Research Group to publish **an updated estimate** of the global prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies among preschool-age children and non-pregnant women.
- Develop manuscripts (and five **summary briefs**) on the biology, assessment, and implementation of interventions with the USAID Advancing Nutrition Anemia Task Force, a collaborative of global experts and practitioners. The manuscripts are intended to help governments and practitioners understand how best to reduce anemia prevalence among children under five years of age and women of reproductive age.
- Facilitate research in five countries in collaboration with the **Hemoglobin Measurement Advisory Group** to identify the best population-based survey procedures and methods for determining hemoglobin concentration, and therefore anemia prevalence.
- Complete a methodology for assessing needs and using data to design large-scale food fortification programs to improve diets.

LOOKING AHEAD

Global efforts to improve nutrition are at a precarious point, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, global conflict, and climate change creating new challenges. The global nutrition community can only implement tangible solutions through continued coordination and collaboration to improve nutrition. USAID Advancing Nutrition will continue to convene and catalyze nutrition action in its final year of implementation and document and share important lessons and resources to further advance nutrition beyond the life of the project.



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