

USAID Advancing Nutrition

Nutrition-sensitive Programming in Tanzania

USAID Advancing Nutrition, a five-year project started in October 2018, brings together global expertise to design, implement, and evaluate programs that address the root causes of malnutrition. With headquarters in the United States, we work with USAID Missions that request our technical assistance and currently have offices in Mozambique, Tanzania, Kyrgyzstan, and Ghana. JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI R&T) leads the project with nine partners that guide country implementation. In Tanzania, Helen Keller International provides leadership for the project's activities.

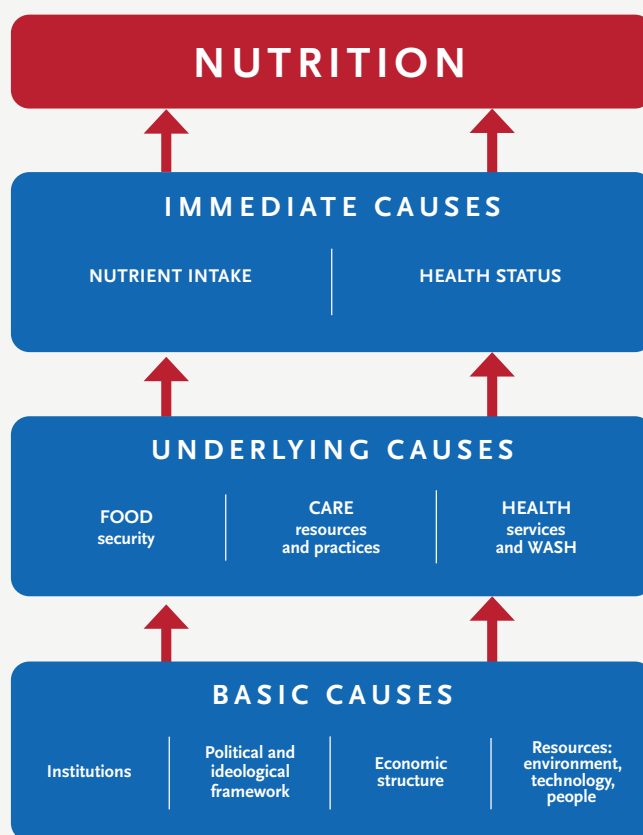
USAID Advancing Nutrition's program in Tanzania

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen the Prime Minister's Office and the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Center to facilitate integration of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific components of the National Multi-sectoral Nutrition Action Plan (NMNAP) across key line ministries.
- **Objective 2:** Support the development of NMNAP II and its Common Results Framework.
- **Objective 3:** Provide targeted technical assistance to USAID Tanzania's implementing partners.

What does "nutrition-sensitive" mean?

The term nutrition-sensitive refers to interventions that address the underlying causes of malnutrition. Immediate causes of malnutrition are addressed by "nutrition-specific" programming,

Figure 1. Determinants of Child Undernutrition



Adapted from UNICEF, 1990.

whereas the underlying causes are addressed by nutrition-sensitive programming (see figure 1).¹

Why should we care?

Nutrition is often considered the domain of the health sector; however, nutrition-specific programming that is part of basic health care is not sufficient

¹ United Nations Children's Fund. 2015. *UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children*. Discussion paper. New York: UNICEF.

to address malnutrition. The famous 2013 Lancet series on maternal and child nutrition showed that scaling up 10 nutrition-specific interventions to 90 percent coverage could reduce the prevalence of stunting by 20 percent.² This indicates that nutrition-specific interventions must be complemented by actions that target the underlying causes of malnutrition.

A multi-sectoral approach to nutrition programming means that addressing malnutrition is not only the responsibility of nutrition experts in the health sector. The NMNAP for 2016–2021 is a government-led plan that combines the actions of nine ministries, departments, and agencies to address malnutrition among vulnerable groups in Tanzania. Some of these are better positioned to focus on the immediate causes, while others can better influence the underlying causes. Additionally, many programs in other sectors operate at larger scales, making it possible to stretch the reach of nutrition programming. Health interventions are often resource intensive, limiting their scale. Programs in other sectors may serve as a platform for nutrition messaging or link to nutrition-specific interventions. Win-win opportunities for nutrition exist in many sectors.

What is the state of the evidence base?

Although the term nutrition-sensitive has been commonly used in the nutrition community since the Lancet series introduced it in 2013, we still need to build the evidence base. Evidence for health research is usually generated by randomized control trials, but these are rarely possible in communities with high burdens of malnutrition, not to mention the obvious ethical issues. Also, pathways to improved nutrition tend to be long and non-linear. For example, an agriculture

project will not contribute directly to reductions in stunting but can contribute to increased dietary diversity. In program design and monitoring, evaluation, and learning, it is critical to think through results pathways and consider intermediate outcomes as progress.

How do we progress?

Many linkages to nutrition are inherent. In agriculture, for example, an obvious pathway to nutrition is food production. Sometimes the linkage is not so obvious, but common approaches can be adapted to increase other sectors' ability to support nutrition outcomes. The following points can help you think through opportunities for nutrition-sensitive programming:

- Focus on your sector's potential role in addressing nutrition needs.
- Explicitly incorporate nutritional considerations into the initial design of projects and policies.
- Identify existing interventions that could be modified to be more nutrition-sensitive.
- Where possible, use sector programs as delivery platforms for health and nutrition services, and nutrition-specific interventions.
- Integrate nutrition outcomes as elements of investments, not always as the primary objective.
- Program designs should minimize unintended negative consequences to nutrition and maximize positive impacts of work led by other sectors.

Improving nutrition in Tanzania must be a multi-sectoral effort but every sector's role will be different. Think through the prompts above to identify how your ministry, department, or agency might integrate nutrition outcomes into its programming, while continuing to work toward existing agendas and goals.

2 Bhutta, Zulfiqar A., Jai K. Das, Arjumand Rizvi, Michelle F. Gaffey, Neff Walker, Susan Horton, Patrick Webb et al. "Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: what can be done and at what cost?" *The lancet* 382, no. 9890 (2013): 452-477.

USAID Advancing Nutrition in Tanzania

The Agency's flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project

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