

Strengthening Strategic Engagements Across Multi-Stakeholders to Increase Coordination, Capacity, and Commitment to Expand, Improve, and Sustain Large-Scale Food Fortification in Uganda

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KEY TAKE-AWAY

Fostering strategic multi-stakeholder engagements, increases capacity and commitment to expand, improve, and sustain national fortification programmes.

BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVE



Addressing micronutrient deficiencies requires functional and accountable institutional governance and leadership to coordinate and collaborate across different stakeholder groups. In 2003, the Ministry of Health established the National Working Group on Food Fortification (NWGFF) which includes institutions with specific mandates to

support LSSF, to provide oversight and leadership to the public and private sectors for effective implementation of the food fortification programme. However, since the inception, irregular NWGFF coordination and collaboration activities has stalled efforts to develop, update, and translate policy and evidence-based data into institutionalized, sustainable program actions. USAID Advancing Nutrition, supported activities to strengthen stakeholder engagement and collaboration towards improving coordination efforts and strengthening capacity for effective large-scale food fortification (LSFF) programming.

METHODS

Between February 2022 and June 2023 USAID Advancing Nutrition—

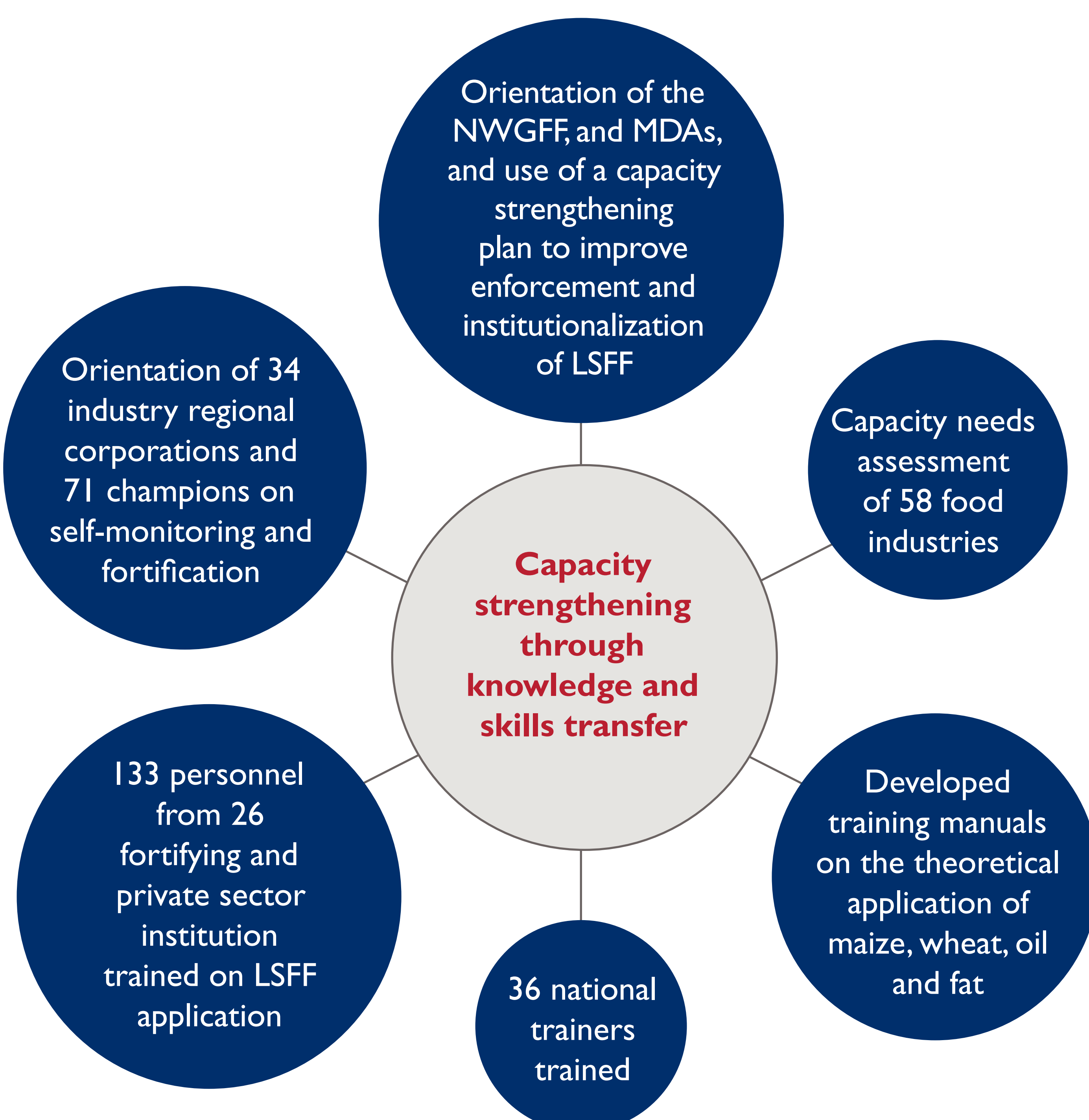
- conducted a network analysis of key institutions on mandates, stakeholder engagement, information and knowledge sharing activities across stakeholders and platforms
- assessed the influence of joint activities on stakeholder functionality, strategic policy and program decisions for fortification
- assessed the capacity needs and developed a capacity strengthening plan for the NWGFF
- identified priority actions and aligned to institutional mandates
- updated the NWGFF terms of reference and revitalized the NWGFF and ministries, departments, and agencies (MDA) functions
- facilitated technical and strategic joint planning and implementation of activities using evidence-based data
- strengthened capacity of the national trainers and trained government and the private sector entities
- documented technical evidence to guide policy and programming for fortification.



Participants at a national trainers workshop perform iron spot test a rapid test method used to determine the presence of iron in flour at Nile Agro Industries in Jinja. Photo Credit: USAID Advancing Nutrition Uganda

RESULTS

Figure 1. Capacity Strengthening Efforts through Knowledge and Skills Transfer



RESULTS: 22% increase in compliance to standards and 98% knowledge and skills gain

By June 2023, USAID Advancing Nutrition had supported 29 strategic engagements with 320 institutions and 1,048 people from MDAs, regulatory bodies, private sector entities and fortifying industries, academia, civil society, and partners include—

- A significant shift in commitment and ownership by the MDAs through joint planning and identification of priority actions used for integration into the fiscal year work plans and allocation of over \$100,000 funds by the health, education, and trade sectors, to institutionalize, improve, expand, and sustain LSFF.
- Orientation of all the 25 MDAs on mandates strengthened capacity to enforce fortification regulations and standards. The capacity strengthening plan focused on enhancing the functions of the NWGFF (institutional coordination, governance, institutionalization, monitoring, and resource mobilization).
- The inclusion of all stakeholders improved communication, information sharing, and utilization of data in translating policy, program, and consensus on the strategic direction for LSFF.
- Fostering the enabling environment for industries to engage in, implement, and sustain fortification, within the broader context of food processing increased compliance standards by 22 percent through the—
 - assessment of the capacity needs of 58 industries
 - orientation of 34 industry regional corporations and 71 champions on self-monitoring
 - training 36 national trainers, who trained 132 personnel from 26 fortifying industries.

CONCLUSIONS/FINDINGS

Successful implementation of food fortification programs relies on a robust public-private partnership through strategic stakeholder engagement and collaboration, which plays a pivotal role in strengthening the capacity and commitment of institutions to expand, improve, and sustain national fortification programs.

The NWGFF has shown that fostering strategic engagements with multi-stakeholders and public-private sector institutions implements activities in sustaining policy and programs for LSFF towards achieving a common outcome.