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Summary Report on Progress to Integrate Nutrition in Tanzania's Ministries, Departments, and Agencies' Processes and Documents

Background

Collaboration is a key theme of the USAID Advancing Nutrition (USAID AN) project in Tanzania. The activity team works closely with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Tanzania Food and Nutrition Center (TFNC), and these two relationships are evident in all activities, both by formal design and through flexible engagement.

In the second year of implementation, we continued to provide technical assistance to PMO and TFNC on Activity I.1.4: Support PMO and TFNC to participate in ongoing review of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDA) policies and strategies to ensure nutrition is well integrated in key nutrition-sensitive intervention (NSI) MDA documents. Activity I.1.4 was designed to support the MDAs identified as nutrition sensitive in the National Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (NMNAP).

The nutrition-sensitive MDAs are:

- Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
- Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MoLF)
- Ministry of Industry and Trade (MITI)
- Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP)
- Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children (MoHCDGEC)
- Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST)
- Ministry of Water (MoW)
- President Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PO RALG)
- TFNC

Through this activity, PMO, TFNC, and USAID AN provide targeted technical assistance related to nutrition-sensitive programming to the MDAs while responding to their challenges on a technical level. All action within the activity was informed by lessons learned from Project Year I implementation and the needs identified by the Government of Tanzania actors.

This activity builds on valuable learnings that emerged from a Project Year I activity: a rapid review of nutrition-sensitive sectoral plans. The review was the first of its kind, and findings provided insight on specific challenges encountered by each MDA to integrate nutrition as guided by the NMNAP. The review was an important first step for PMO, TFNC, and USAID AN to better tailor support to MDAs

Key Messages

- Multisectoral nutrition programming requires continuous coordination among nutrition stakeholders.
- Influence on nutrition varies by sector, requiring different approaches and tailored technical assistance.
- Technical support and routine interactions are crucial to the operationalization of MDAs' plans.
- Regular reviews of plans and supporting documents helps to ensure accountability.

that were dealing with the responsibility of integrating nutrition into their programming for the first time. Specifically, the assessment was designed to:

- (i) determine whether the MDAs' plans aligned with activities proposed in the NMNAP
- (ii) assess current capacity for nutrition sensitive programming
- (iii) identify opportunities for continued engagement with the MDAs

Findings from the review were useful to the MDAs in that they required them to revisit the activities that the NMNAP suggested for their plans and reminded them of the commitment made by their respective permanent secretaries. The review also highlighted an important lesson for PMO and TFNC—that even with solid plans in place, institutionalizing nutrition components into MDAs would require regular communication, possible changes to or adaptation of activities not progressing as planned, and sometimes multiple reviews of nutrition fundamentals.

Following the assessment, USAID AN facilitated several document reviews and development opportunities during which PMO and TFNC could ensure nutrition was integrated in MDAs' key documents. To further institutionalize a relationship between MDAs and PMO and TFNC for nutrition guidance, USAID AN worked with its government counterparts to track specific requests for nutrition assistance as they were received. Each MDA has a different role to play in the NMNAP, and their approach to nutrition depends on the sector and how they influence nutrition. Moving into NMNAP II, USAID AN is prepared to support PMO and TFNC to have a means of tracking requests for assistance.

This report summarizes the experiences one year after the rapid assessment and process that USAID AN, PMO, and TFNC used to raise awareness of nutrition and opportunities to access technical support, and to participate in relevant exercises hosted by MDAs.

Process of engaging nutrition-sensitive MDAs

Within USAID AN's scope, Objective I focuses on strengthening PMO and TFNC capacity to support nutrition programming across key line ministries. In late 2020, USAID AN shared the technical narrative of the approved work plan with PMO and TFNC for in-depth brainstorming to prepare for each activity and ensure a common vision of each institution's perspective. For Activity 1.1.4—support PMO and TFNC to participate in ongoing review of MDA policies and strategies for nutrition integration—the team agreed to use two main platforms to ensure MDAs understood nutrition sensitive concepts and the process to access customized nutrition technical support:

- brown bag nutrition orientation sessions with individual MDAs
- quarterly NSI Technical Workshop Groups (TWGs)

Brown Bag Nutrition Orientation Sessions

During the brown bag orientation sessions, facilitators (PMO or TFNC representatives) requested information on MDA plans and describe the nutrition support available through TFNC. Facilitators reflected on questions from MDA staff and considered both what the MDA representatives describe as needs for support as well as opportunities they identify to integrate nutrition in MDA plans.

In addition, for those MDAs for which the rapid assessment captured their plans to develop or review key documents or plan an event or activity where nutrition might be highlighted, facilitators requested that the MDAs involve TFNC for input at critical times. This approach was intended to encourage an ongoing relationship with TFNC in which it serves as the technical advisor on nutrition at any critical time and not only when suggested by TFNC.

Process of engaging NSI MDAs

Within USAID AN's scope, Objective 1 focuses on strengthening PMO and TFNC capacity to support nutrition programming across key line ministries. In late 2020, USAID AN shared the technical narrative of the approved work plan with PMO and TFNC for in-depth brainstorming to prepare for each activity and ensure a common vision of each institution's perspective. For Activity 1.1.4—support PMO and TFNC to participate in ongoing review of MDA policies and strategies for nutrition integration—the team agreed to use two main platforms to ensure MDAs understood nutrition-sensitive interventions (NSI) and the process to access customized nutrition technical support:

- brown bag nutrition orientation sessions with individual MDAs
- quarterly NSI Technical Workshop Groups (TWGs)

Brown Bag Nutrition Orientation Sessions

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Quarterly NSI TWGs

During the quarterly TWG meetings, USAID AN, alongside PMO and TFNC, checked in with the MDA nutrition focal person and reminded them of the availability of PMO and TFNC technical support. In advance of each TWG, PMO and TFNC facilitated a review of nutrition-sensitive MDA progress reports, which familiarized them with what the MDAs had implemented, what had gone well, areas for improvement, and their plans for the next quarter. Through this quick review exercise, the team stayed up to date on nutrition-sensitive MDAs' plans and addressed specific issues in the TWG itself.

The last three TWGs helped establish the precedent of regular contact with TFNC and a channel to vet nutrition challenges that may arise in programming.

Progress to Date

Activity 1.1.4 has allowed for increased interaction with each nutrition-sensitive MDA nutrition focal person and the MDA management teams. The brown bags and quarterly NSI TWGs have contributed to increased awareness of the importance of formally integrating nutrition into key MDA documents, such as policies and strategies, and the institutionalization of PMO and TFNC as technical resources and advisors. The collaboration with PMO and TFNC has also supported the development of guidance materials and trainings for the MDAs.

Additionally, since most MDA documents take time to develop and review, the USAID AN team facilitated targeted support to three MDAs—Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Agriculture—in response to their needs.

Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST)

Following an orientation session for the MoEST management team in late-2020 and follow-up interactions in TWG meetings, MoEST requested TFNC to provide technical support for the development of meal planning guidelines for teacher training colleges. MoEST believed that, with this guideline in place at training institutions, it would be easier for nutrition behaviors related to food choice

to trickle down to schools. TFNC provided the technical support to MoEST and finalized the feeding guideline, which was approved in April 2021.

MoEST also requested TFNC to share a package of materials to promote good food choices and physical activity among school-aged children.

Ministry of Health—Community Development Department

The Ministry of Health’s Community Development Department requested TFNC to provide technical support to review the Community Development Policy of 1996. While one of the objectives in the current policy is to ensure communities value their children and provide good nutrition, the nutrition-sensitive MDA thought there were many angles in the policy in which nutrition could be further heightened for greater impact, including focusing on the lifecycle approach in promoting nutrition and clearly linking local community development staff to support relevant nutrition interventions.

While the work is in early stages, both TFNC and the Community Development Department think the resulting policy will be one of the exemplary policies in which nutrition will be well integrated because the two institutions worked together from the planning stage.

Ministry of Agriculture

USAID AN and TFNC continued to participate in the development of the Ministry’s Agriculture Action Plan to ensure nutrition is well integrated. USAID AN staff had multiple interactions with the consultant who supported action plan development to share lessons learned from ongoing project activities, including the outcome of the rapid assessment and planning and budgeting of NSI MDA’s activities. TFNC continues to participate and technically support the process to ensure nutrition is well mainstreamed in the plan.

Planning and Budget for NSI MDAs

In November 2020, a team led by PMO and supported by TFNC, USAID AN, World Food Programme, and Sokoine University of Agriculture drafted guidelines to provide nutrition-sensitive MDAs with a process to systematically integrate nutrition into their annual plans and budgets. The resulting document, known as the Guideline for Planning and Budgeting for Nutrition-Sensitive Ministries, was finalized and disseminated by PMO to inform preparation of 2021/2022 budgets. TFNC, PMO, and USAID AN conducted an orientation session to review the guidelines with all NSI MDAs and prepare them to use the guidelines internally.

In June 2021, USAID AN participated in a formal scrutinization exercise of the NSI MDA budgets to determine how well nutrition activities were thoughtfully represented. PMO chaired the workshop, with TFNC and USAID comprising the review team. The workshop used a tool developed to systematically collect the following information from each MDA budget:

- number of nutrition-sensitive activities
- quality of activities
- alignment with key Government of Tanzania documents—NMNAP, the Five-Year Development Program (FYDP), the Ruling Party Manifesto, budget amount, and notes

The “quality” ranking assigned a value of 1 for activities for which the linkage to nutrition was completely clear as written, and 2 for activities for which either the activity needed to be rephrased for clarity or a small adaptation could be made to make the activity nutrition sensitive. All activities ranked as 2 included notes suggesting the necessary adjustments or other questions or comments.

Overall, out of 106 activities, 56 were ranked as 1 and 50 were ranked as 2. The most common challenge with developing activities seemed to be MDAs’ uncertainty around nutrition outcomes

relevant to the MDA. Many of the activities ranked as 1 were straightforward—for example, a nutrition-related event or services. They were not longer-term, complex activities leading to improved nutrition.

This overarching finding is useful to refine the Guideline for Planning and Budgeting for Nutrition-Sensitive Ministries because it suggests that it is appropriate for the guideline to focus on nutrition activities that clearly fit into the individual MDA mandate, as opposed to attempting to introduce unrelated activities. The guidelines stress that, even if an activity does not have a direct nutrition outcome (e.g., a reduction in stunting), if it is reasonable and feasible for the MDA to achieve, then it is probably that MDA's sector's most logical contribution to nutrition.

The scrutinization exercise was promising in that none of the activities listed were unrealistic; they were activities within the MDA's existing capacity and ability to influence nutrition. For some activities, TFNC should be consulted for technical assistance and to plan operationally for the nutrition outcome—for example, advising on an appropriate indicator to track progress or review nutrition messaging in a course or training material.

Moving Forward

As USAID AN Tanzania moves into its third year of implementation, the team is enthusiastic about Activity 1.1.4's evolution. Through the activity, TFNC's capacity to field NSI MDAs' nutrition-related challenges will continue to grow.

The two platforms used during Project Year 2 will continue to be important opportunities to interact with NSI MDAs, though the need for nutrition orientation brown bags will likely grow into more targeted capacity-strengthening activities based on MDAs' specific interests and needs.

The use of the Guideline for Planning and Budgeting for Nutrition-Sensitive Ministries presents an opportunity to institutionalize an annual point of contact between TFNC and individual MDAs to review the success of nutrition integration and implement improvements every year.

With the NMNAP II release anticipated in July 2021, USAID AN will use this channel to support PMO and TFNC to formalize a process for MDAs to request nutrition technical assistance and to ensure that the increased understanding of nutrition and its integration into activities becomes a regular part of nutrition-sensitive MDA operations. This will continue to firmly establish TFNC as a thought leader and technical advisor in this space.



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