



Nutrition Governance

Lessons Learned from USAID Advancing Nutrition

Background

Good governance, according to the former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, “is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development” (UN 1998). Since then, researchers have undertaken a number of studies to assess nutrition governance and made efforts to improve it.

In 2007, the World Health Organization set out to assess countries’ readiness to accelerate action in nutrition, defined as willingness (political commitment, policies and budget for nutrition, coordination, involvement of partners, and support to subnational levels) to scale-up nutrition actions and capacity (human resources, quality of services, management systems and supplies, and demand-side factors) to do so (Nishida, Shrimpton, and Darnton-Hill 2009).

In 2012, Acosta and Fanzo explored governance as it relates to delivering a national multi-sectoral response to nutrition. They identified four key elements of nutrition governance: intersectoral cooperation between government and nongovernmental actors, vertical coordination within the government, sustainable and transparent financing, and mechanisms to monitor and influence (advocacy) decision-making and policy implementation (Acosta and Franzo 2012).

Over the years, some of these elements of nutrition governance have received greater attention than others. Levinson, Balarajan, and Marini emphasized the importance of collaboration and coordination at all levels due to the multi-sectoral nature of nutrition and the need for multi-sectoral action (2013). Most recently, the 2020 *Global Nutrition Report* (Development Initiatives 2020) highlighted accountability as a critical element of nutrition governance and it was a theme of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2021 (Tokyo N4G 2021).

USAID’s *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy* contains a strategic priority to “strengthen essential country systems that assure good governance, resource tracking, and accountability, as well as effective management and delivery of services at national, regional, and local levels” (USAID 2014, 22). This brief synthesizes learning across the life of the USAID Advancing Nutrition project for core and country activities on nutrition governance as well as relevant resources and tools used and/or developed by the

Key Messages

- Supporting nutrition policy development and adoption requires close collaboration with government counterparts from several sectors, tailoring to local contexts, and ensuring use of evidence.
- Planning, budgeting, and financing are vital to translating nutrition policy into action, requiring strong political commitment from multiple sectors, relevant data, policies, guidelines, and capacity strengthening.
- Actors across sectors need to coordinate and collaborate to implement nutrition actions. It helps to build on the efforts of existing government bodies and facilitate productive meetings that review progress and plan next steps.
- Digital tools can facilitate the collection and use of nutrition data by multiple sectors, incorporating nutrition indicators into national health information systems and monitoring plans. Creating nutrition scorecards and financial tracking tools encourages the use of nutrition data for planning and budgeting purposes.

project. We will share illustrative examples and lessons learned from USAID Advancing Nutrition’s work in the following areas of nutrition governance:

- policy development and adoption
- planning, budgeting, and financing
- coordination and collaboration
- accountability: data collection and use.

USAID Advancing Nutrition Goals and Approach

USAID Advancing Nutrition’s commitment to strengthening nutrition governance took root in our very approach to setting goals and designing and planning activities that aligned with country-led and -owned priorities. As such, our goals and approach to nutrition governance varied significantly based on country priorities. The approaches we used included providing technical assistance, supporting capacity strengthening, and acting as a convenor and facilitator. Work done by other USAID projects informed our thinking on nutrition governance and approaches, including the [User’s Guide to the Nutrition Budget Analysis Tool](#) and [Assessing the Application of Systems Thinking for Nutrition](#) tool, produced by the Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project and the [District Nutrition Coordination Committee Initiative Approach to Strengthening Nutrition Governance in Uganda](#), produced by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) project. Find more information on our goals and approaches to governance on our country program web pages: [Tanzania](#), [Kyrgyz Republic](#), [Nigeria](#), [Uganda](#), [Ghana](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Kenya](#), [Mozambique](#), [India](#), and [Honduras](#).

Illustrative Activities and Lessons Learned

Effective nutrition governance ensures accountability, commitment, and leadership across all sectors and levels of government, facilitates coordination across sectors, and contributes to a strong enabling environment for nutrition. While tools and guidance to support the strengthening of multi-sectoral nutrition governance exist, they are not easily accessible in a single location. USAID Advancing Nutrition’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Governance Resource Bank (n.d.) presents existing resources in a user-friendly online tool to support programming related to planning, budgeting, coordination, collaboration, communication, data use, and more.

Policy Development and Adoption

Designing and implementing nutrition policies and policies that influence nutrition (e.g., health, agriculture, trade, gender, social protection) is critical to creating an enabling environment for reforms and investment in nutrition. In several countries, we supported the development and refinement of nutrition policies and strategies at national and sub-national levels. For example—

- In Tanzania, policy development sat at the center of our work. We assisted the Prime Minister’s Office and the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre in developing the second *National Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan (NMNAP)* (PMO 2021a). We applied learnings from the implementation of NMNAP I and also conducted a needs assessment during our first year of implementation. In addition, we reviewed sector policies from all line ministries implicated by the NMNAP I and global nutrition documents; held numerous conversations with partners, communities, and funders; and sat on multiple government-led working groups assembled to produce the NMNAP II. We worked directly with government counterparts at every step of the strategy development process and emphasized the importance of consensus-building and accountability.

- In the Kyrgyz Republic, we helped the Republican Center for Health Promotion under the Ministry of Health (MOH) to develop a social and behavior change communication strategy, clinical guidelines, and protocol for the prevention and control of anemia and for care of children aged 0–17 years at the primary healthcare level as well as a classifier and coding for maternal and child health services. This is a critical first step in developing a basic package of primary healthcare services, including mother and child healthcare services, and estimating its cost. In addition, the project worked in partnership with the Medical Health Insurance Fund to institutionalize the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative by updating national standards for antenatal, postnatal, maternity, and newborn care practices to include the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Ten Steps.
- In Nigeria, the *National Food and Nutrition Policy and a Multi-Sectoral Plan of Action* lays out what national-level ministries will do (GON 2020), but the State Committees for Food and Nutrition (SCFN) needed to figure out what that meant for them. We supported five states¹ to develop their own state-level food and nutrition policies. To support the development of these policies, USAID Advancing Nutrition provided technical support and helped states organize and facilitate workshops for crafting their state-level policies. These policies have been developed, adapted, and signed off on by the state governor and disseminated to the public.
- In Uganda, using findings from a comprehensive analysis of the food fortification landscape we conducted, we worked with key government institutions to develop a national guidance document, *Priority Actions for the Strengthening Institutionalization of the Food Fortification Program* (GOU 2023b). Key institutions are currently using the document to inform integration of the food fortification activities into their work plans, which will further inform the development of the *National Development Plan IV*.
- In Honduras, we collaborated with the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama to conduct a landscape analysis of large-scale food fortification, a secondary analysis of national household consumption and expenditure survey data, and an analysis of micronutrients in fortified foods in markets. We collaborated with the Government of Honduras to host a meeting to share the findings, which motivated the government to take ownership of its role leading policy analysis and action in large-scale food fortification. As a result, the government reactivated the National Consultative Committee for Micronutrients (Consejo Consultivo de Micronutrientes), which had been inactive for 10 years, and has an important role in large-scale food fortification policy and program design. The consultative committee is composed of government, academia, donors, and the private sector. We learned that buy-in from the highest authorities is key to success, as the Minister of Health delegated an MOH staff person to work in this initiative, which motivated the planning process. Also, the private sector producers were involved from the beginning so owned the process and are motivated to present good results, improve their products, and positively influence the Honduran population’s nutritional status.
- In Nigeria and Zambia, we worked with a group of local stakeholders when we piloted a methodology to assess diets, markets, and cost and affordability of an adequate diet to inform large-scale food fortification needs assessment and design. Our preliminary results in Nigeria showed the potential contribution of rice fortification to micronutrient adequacy. The Government of Nigeria is interested in the possibility of mandatory rice fortification, and a technical working group is actively investigating the opportunity. Our results may provide additional evidence regarding rice fortification in Nigeria. Our analyses of large-scale food fortification opportunities in Zambia may provide evidence to support large-scale fortification of oil in the country, but additional analyses are necessary with more recent data. In both countries, industry feasibility must be adequately addressed. Working with a local stakeholder group helped

¹ Kebbi, Sokoto, Ebonyi, Bauchi, and Federal Capital Territory

to build accurate large scale food fortification modeling scenarios and refine the analysis, improving policy relevance.

- Ghana has a four-year national development planning process that ensures stakeholders map out, prioritize, appropriately budget for, and fund development issues. The *National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework* guides this process (GOG 2021). USAID Advancing Nutrition worked with the National Development Planning Commission to draft, review, validate, and finalize a supplement to national *Guidelines for Preparing Sector and District Medium-Term Development Plans* (NDPC 2020) and the *Ghana Multi-Sector Food and Nutrition Security Planning Guidelines*. The guidance explains how various sectors in a district can work together to mainstream food and nutrition issues and actions in their medium-term development plans.

Lessons learned from our work supporting policy development and adoption include—

- Work with government counterparts at every step of the nutrition policy development, adaptation, and review process to help build consensus, produce a technically sound and feasible strategy, establish a strong sense of ownership within the government and among key stakeholders, and increase the chances of nutrition policies being put into action.
- Adapt nutrition policies to the economic, cultural, social, and geographic characteristics of the local context for policies to be effective.
- Address micronutrient supply chain challenges in the context of overall government drug supply strategies rather than as a stand-alone approach.
- Ensure evidence informs nutrition policy development. Package evidence in small amounts for policymakers in ways that are attractive, easy-to-read, and relevant for their goals and mandates.

Planning, Budgeting, and Financing

Translating policy into action requires planning, budgeting, and collaboration among governments and implementing partners to ensure adequate financing. We have sought to improve this throughout the life of the project in numerous countries.

Our review of the sustainability of several large USAID nutrition projects informed much of our work in this area, from which we identified lessons learned from engaging and supporting government planning and budgeting. Based on this review, we developed guidance on sustainable financing, [Transitioning Nutrition Financing from USAID to Domestic Resources](#), which provides recommendations for USAID Missions and implementing partners for transitioning USAID nutrition activities from depending on global resources to generating domestic resources and more sustainable financing. The guidance offers three broad recommendations for USAID programs—

1. Work in concert with governments to develop a transparent, achievable, long-term transition plan.
2. Work in concert with governments to strategically plan for implementation in accordance with cyclical government processes and in alignment with the long-term transition plan.
3. Ensure transparent and shared data, monitoring, evaluation, and learning for the activity, intervention, and the transition of financing (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2020).

Meanwhile, at the country level, we worked to build leadership and capacity for nutrition planning, budgeting, and financing. For example—

- In Burkina Faso, we adapted existing government guidance for results-based management to suit a multi-sectoral audience and expanded it to include an explanation of the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to improving nutrition as well as examples of multi-sectoral nutrition actions.
- In Kenya, our primary objective was to strengthen government capacity to plan, finance, manage, and implement multi-sectoral nutrition interventions to improve the health of populations at risk of nutritional deficiencies. We helped government leaders at the national and county level and multi-sectoral nutrition stakeholders to establish multi-sectoral nutrition platforms, convene quarterly meetings, and conduct sector performance reviews. Findings from the reviews were used to determine government priorities, allocate funding, and develop annual strategic plans. Working with these multi-sectoral nutrition platforms, we finalized a multi-sectoral nutrition scorecard and a financial tracking tool and developed briefs and investment cases to guide planning processes. As a result, the multi-sectoral nutrition leadership developed the first-ever county-specific Agri-Nutrition Implementation Strategies and increased the nutrition funding in the County Integrated Development Plans (2023–27).
- In Ghana, we helped 17 districts in the Northern, Upper East, Upper West, and North East Regions to conduct food and nutrition security situation analyzes. At the same time, we worked with the National Development Planning Commission to prepare guidelines for districts on integrating food and nutrition into their medium-term development plans. Working with government officials and district nutrition coordination committees we organized stakeholder workshops where we presented and discussed our findings to identify and prioritize food and nutrition security issues and advocate for inclusion of actions and funding for food and nutrition security in their medium-term development plans. We conducted a [review of the integration of food and nutrition security into district medium-term development plans](#) after providing support on this integration. On average, we found an increase in the number of food and nutrition security issues, objectives, and actions and an increase in budgetary allocations in the 2022–2025 medium-term development plans compared to the 2018–2021 plans. Stakeholders identified several activities supported by USAID Advancing Nutrition that facilitated these increases, including forming district nutrition coordination committees, having food and nutrition security planning guidelines, conducting food and nutrition security situational analyses, and holding joint planning sessions (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2022b).
- In Ghana and Malawi, we implemented activities to help increase country-level financing for nutrition by strengthening the capacity of government and local partners to develop sustainable financing strategies in health and agriculture, based on available evidence and data. We used consultations with district-level stakeholders to determine stakeholder priorities and then adapted our activity priorities to make sure the tools for sustainable financing were context specific and met stakeholder needs. Resource tracking was new to most of the districts, so linking it with their nutrition plans was helpful. We also focused on adapting sustainable financing tools to district-specific contexts.
- In Tanzania, we assisted the Prime Minister’s Office and the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre in developing the [Resources Mobilization Strategy](#) (PMO 2021b; USAID Advancing Nutrition 2021b), and the *Planning and Budgeting Guidelines for Nutrition-Sensitive Sectors*. As described in a [brief](#), we used a multi-phase approach and included capacity strengthening throughout to ensure government ownership and strengthen government capacity to complete resource mobilization strategies in the future (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2021b).

Lessons learned from this work include—

- It is crucial that multi-sectoral nutrition planning adheres to national nutrition policies and aligns with national plans.
- Prominent leaders such as governors and governors' spouses made excellent nutrition champions, helping decision makers understand the importance of nutrition and prioritize it in plans.
- Having a national nutrition policy and plan paved the way for nutrition planning at the sub-national level.
- We also needed data, guidance, and tools for integration of food and nutrition security into plans and budgets (identifying needs, targeting and prioritizing interventions, etc.).
- Policies, plans, data, guidance, and tools are sometimes still not enough to effectively integrate food and nutrition security into plans and budgets. Nutrition mainstreaming will remain an aspiration, if the capacity to use data, policies, guidance, and tools does not exist. In most cases, we also had to strengthen the capacity of government officials at various levels through trainings, mentoring, and technical support.
- Fostering joint planning and implementation of nutrition-related actions across multi-sectoral stakeholder groups helped improve, expand, and sustain investments, supporting efforts to ensure the work aligns with government priorities, follows government processes, and is assigned to responsible parties.
- Stakeholders need to regularly review performance/implementation of plans to ensure implementation is progressing according to plan and to improve subsequent plans.
- Evidence was key to demonstrate the value-add of nutrition investments to decision makers and how the investment will help achieve positive change in the main nutrition indicators/goals.
- Include finance ministry officials from the beginning of budgeting for nutrition to ensure that budgeting and financial monitoring systems are utilized and followed.
- Implementing partners can effectively facilitate an iterative scoping, visioning, and planning process to help establish consensus and ownership among multi-sectoral stakeholders to inform the development of a national nutrition resource mobilization strategy and ensure the strategy aligns with government priorities and needs.

Coordination and Collaboration

Developing, updating, and translating policy into action and implementing multi-sectoral nutrition actions requires leaders, entities, and systems to coordinate and collaborate across sectors that influence nutrition. In almost all of the countries where we have worked, we sought to strengthen coordination and collaboration for nutrition governance. For example—

- In Burkina Faso, we supported national and regional level multi-sectoral nutrition coordination meetings and in Tanzania we provided technical support to the Prime Minister's Office and Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre to strengthen coordination of stakeholders from multiple sectors.
- In Ghana, one of the first steps we took to improve planning for nutrition at the district level was to support the formation of [District Nutrition Coordination Committees](#). Working with Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) of the Upper East, Upper West, Northern, and North East Regions, 17 district nutrition coordination committees were inaugurated in March 2021. They were tasked with championing nutrition and facilitating planning and budgeting for nutrition activities; ensuring collaboration, coordination, and synergy; and mobilizing resources to support

nutrition activities. We conducted a series of trainings for district nutrition coordination committee members on topics such as nutrition advocacy and negotiation, resource mobilization, and team building. We also provided technical and financial support to district nutrition coordination committees for their quarterly coordination meetings and worked with RCCs to conduct supportive supervision for the district nutrition coordination committees, using a checklist we developed in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service for assessing their functionality and providing support where needed. Government officials identified the formation of these committees as one of the main factors that contributed to increased integration of food and nutrition security into medium-term development plans (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2022a).

- In Honduras, we worked with 11 municipalities in the departments of Lempira, Copán, Ocotepeque, and Santa Bárbara to establish and/or strengthen their [municipal intersectoral councils](#). The MOH originally established these to deal with emergency situations. USAID Advancing Nutrition identified these councils as key structures for collaboration and coordination of multi-sectoral nutrition activities. We developed guidance to help establish and manage these committees to better tackle malnutrition with multi-sectoral actions. We encouraged the participation of representatives from the health and education sectors as well as local government and civil society. We provided administrative, financial, and technical assistance to the councils, training council members in operating regulations, identification and prioritization of problems, and the development of evidence-based work plans. They now have established fluid and constructive communication among sectors and are jointly addressing challenges in nutrition and well-being of the population. Such collaboration and coordination helps avoid duplication of actions and improves transparent and efficient use of resources.
- In Nigeria, State Committees for Food and Nutrition are key players in coordinating food and nutrition interventions. USAID Advancing Nutrition developed the SCFN orientation package to establish uniformity across all SCFNs and to help each member of the SCFN understand their key roles and responsibilities in the multi-sectoral approach of addressing the issue of nutrition in the state. We helped to reactivate five SCFNs, ensuring that they include actors from ministries, departments, and agencies from multiple sectors. After conducting capacity assessments of the SCFNs in [Bauchi](#) (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2022c), [Kebbi](#) (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2022d), and [Sokoto](#) (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2022e) States, we worked to [strengthen their capacity](#) to coordinate, plan for, implement, and evaluate food and nutrition programs and policies. We embedded consultants in these SCFNs to help push forward capacity strengthening action plans.
- In Uganda, we strengthened the functionality of the National Working Group on Food Fortification and sub-committees by supporting the revision of the [National Working Group on Food Fortification Terms of Reference](#) (GOU n.d.), the orientation of new members, and the development of a [Capacity Strengthening Plan](#) for the National Working Group on Food Fortification, which focused on coordination and governance, among other relevant topics (GOU 2023a).

Lessons learned from this work include—

- Evidence and champions were invaluable for advocating for multi-sectoral leaders to engage in and coordinate nutrition action.
- Strong political commitment is crucial for multisectoral coordination and collaboration.
- It is important to engage and strengthen existing national and sub-national government mechanisms, platforms, and structures to facilitate improved nutrition coordination and collaboration and promote sustainability. However, it is important to assess their strengths and address their gaps and weaknesses.

- Mapping the existing coordination structures and assessing inherent gaps, strengths, and opportunities can enable tailored technical assistance to strengthen nutrition programming.
- Nutrition coordination and collaboration requires capacity strengthening and functional meetings for the review of key indicators, the assessment of progress towards achieving targets, and the identification of next steps.
- Actors that are not traditionally concerned about nutrition need sensitization on how good nutrition can help them achieve their goals to facilitate their engagement in nutrition coordination and collaboration.
- It is important to identify and involve all relevant government institutions. For example, involving ministries of health and finance as well as regulatory bodies and industry facilitated the collaboration and coordination needed to move the food fortification agenda forward.
- Clear terms of reference for coordination bodies can boost accountability for results and help clarify roles and mandates of the different institutions for more active engagement and better results.

Data Use for Accountability

For multi-sectoral nutrition programming to be effective, stakeholders need to understand the nutrition situation and context-specific drivers of malnutrition in their areas of intervention.

A low-quality diet is a leading driver of malnutrition worldwide. Understanding the dietary practices of infants, young children, and women can strengthen policies, programs, and interventions to improve nutrition. However, there are important gaps in data on food and nutrient intake. Stakeholders need to be able to adequately measure food and nutrient intake to inform the design of programs, measure effectiveness, and ensure accountability. USAID Advancing Nutrition [activities supported the measurement of diet quality](#) for a range of population groups including women, children, and families. The project developed an inventory of available diet assessment tools and a [decision tool](#) for selecting the most appropriate tool(s). For example, USAID Advancing Nutrition is involved in several activities to advance the [effective use of household consumption and expenditure survey \(HCES\) data](#). We collaborated with the Micronutrient Action Policy Support (MAPS) project to analyze HCES data in Malawi. Modeling with HCES data revealed that large-scale food fortification would contribute to reducing vitamin A inadequacy in Malawi, but other interventions would be needed to fill other gaps in micronutrient intake, especially for the rural poor. USAID Advancing Nutrition continued our collaboration with MAPS, training staff from the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre to conduct a similar analysis with Tanzania HCES data.

Data use is also critical to promote accountability and to inform stakeholders about the progress of interventions and their outcomes so they can make changes to ensure their effectiveness as needed and remain aware of what partners are doing across sectors to identify potential synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.

At the country level, we have promoted the use of data in the following ways:

- In Burkina Faso, we worked with key stakeholders to develop nutrition profiles, using available region-specific data, for the South West, Center East, and Center West. These profiles summarize key multi-sectoral indicators and propose priority actions to take. We also created posters with key data from the regional profiles to use as an advocacy tool to highlight each regions' progress towards targets. Then, following a highly collaborative and multi-sectoral process, we developed a Microsoft Excel-based [dashboard to track key multi-sectoral nutrition indicators](#) and measure progress on the *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategic Plan 2020–2024*. To ensure data quality, we

organized quarterly data meetings with representatives from all relevant stakeholders in our three focus regions and supported Regional Nutrition Councils (*Conseils régionaux de nutrition*) to use the data for oversight of multi-sectoral nutrition programming. Following the positive response to the Excel-based dashboard, government counterparts agreed to use the District Health Information Software 2 to collect, report, and present data on these multi-sectoral nutrition indicators.

- In Ghana, we conducted a landscape mapping of multi-sectoral nutrition governance (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2021a) and worked with nutrition officers from our 17 implementation districts to undertake an expenditure analysis exercise. We then trained them to use the findings to advocate for food and nutrition security actions and funding. We also promoted the use of data to improve the quality of nutrition services. We [introduced the quality improvement approach](#) to regional and district staff and then worked with them to identify coaches, establish facility quality management teams, and implement the approach with a focus on nutrition services. Using materials developed by the USAID-funded Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally project (SPRING n.d.), we trained health facility staff and then supported them in identifying problems, analyzing causes, proposing change ideas, implementing change, supervision and monitoring implementation, and sharing success and failures.
- In Honduras, our team sought to improve the use of data on Comprehensive Attention to Children in the Community (Atención Integral a la Niñez en la Comunidad [AIN-C]), which includes growth monitoring and promotion (GMP), for evidence-based decision making. In collaboration with key stakeholders, the project developed a digital system called the [Digital Registry of Nutrition Activities](#). We then trained health workers to use the system to capture, process, analyze, and report information related to AIN-C and GMP services and outcomes. After less than a year of operation, 54 out of the 56 health facilities located in the municipalities where we operate adopted the system, facilitating the review of data for anomalies, generation of graphs and reports, and use of data for better governance.
- In Kenya, we used available data to develop two advocacy tools—policy briefs for [Kakamega](#) (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2023b), [Kisumu](#) (2023c), and [Kitui](#) (2023d) Counties on the cost of malnutrition—and investment case infographics for [Kakamega](#) (2023e), [Kisumu](#) (2023f), and [Kitui](#) (2023g) Counties. We also worked with these three county governments to develop two nutrition accountability tools—a multi-sectoral nutrition [financial tracking tool](#) (USAID Advancing Nutrition 2022a) and the multi-sectoral nutrition scorecard. The county government (subnational) reviews progress on nutrition spending and indicators on a quarterly basis to determine what progress has been made and what further investments are needed. Our team has seen the scorecard used with internal accountability tools as county executive committee members and chief officers seek to understand why indicators remain unchanged or below targets. In addition, these tools allow the county government to see how every sector contributes to nutrition. We have used the scorecard performance review meetings to foster discussions on how multiple sectors can address nutrition. These include discussions about the—
 - Department of Agriculture prioritizing production of iron-rich crops and African leafy vegetables
 - Department of Health increasing the supply of iron-folic acid to take a more holistic approach to improving women’s iron intake
 - education sector prioritizing funding for early childhood development education for the school feeding program and vitamin A supplementation and GMP in partnership with the health sector.

- In the Kyrgyz Republic, we advocated for (and achieved) the integration of nutrition indicators into the National E-Health Information System and into a national assessment card for monitoring services provided and nutrition outcomes, thereby ensuring accountability of the health system.
- In Nigeria, we provided technical assistance for the development of the Nigeria Governors Forum Scorecard with key nutrition indicators for advocacy to the state government and also to monitor the performance of the State Committees for Food and Nutrition (SCFN). The performance on the scorecard has three colors: white (data not available), red (not done), and green (done). We also supported the set-up of the Food Systems Dashboard, which displays indicators on food systems virtually. The Food Systems Dashboard provides state-specific information about food systems and priority actions for agricultural and other food system actors.
- In Uganda, we conducted a market surveillance study that determined the availability of the existing fortified food brands at the retail level and the presence and adequacy of the required micronutrients in the four fortified food vehicles (edible oil and fat, wheat flour, maize meal, and food grade salt) in Uganda. The findings provide information on the compliance of fortified foods and will inform programming for food fortification. We synthesized the 2018/2019 Uganda National Panel Survey findings on food fortification and developed a technical brief to inform evidenced-based programming for food fortification in Uganda. In addition, we conducted an [industry analysis](#) (GOU 2023c) that was a stepping stone to understand the landscape and investments in food fortification. Estimates of the contribution of fortified foods to the population's nutrient needs are currently being utilized to inform food fortification programming.

From this work, we have learned—

- Quarterly quality improvement learning sessions with facility quality management teams provided a great opportunity for reflecting, learning, and training to address knowledge gaps.
- The close collaborative relationship we developed with health service providers was a key ingredient for the uptake of this digital health information system. The continuous (formal and informal, in person and virtual) support we provided to health service providers was key to the success of the information system.
- Nutrition information systems are more robust in the health sector for various reasons (e.g., nutrition has been viewed as a health issue, multiplicity of nutrition partners/donors in the sector), than in other sectors, such as agriculture, education, social protection, and water and sanitation.
- Identifying nutrition indicators that multiple sectors can collect and use is critical.
- Facilitate the use of nutrition data by collecting data with digital applications, incorporating nutrition indicators into national health information systems and government nutrition monitoring plans, and creating nutrition scorecards and financial tracking tools.
- Data on nutrition must be available for advocacy, as it allows stakeholders to estimate and understand the potential impact of a range of nutrition investments.
- Accountability is critical and it is important to develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess policy implementation regularly, at least semi-annually.
- Availability of accurate and complete financial data is needed to develop sustainable financing frameworks.

Resources and Tools

USAID Advancing Nutrition developed several resources and tools that may be useful to others globally:

- [Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Governance Resource Bank \(2023a\)](#)
- [Transitioning Nutrition Financing from USAID to Domestic Resources](#)
- [Supporting the Development of Tanzania’s National Resource Mobilization Strategy for Nutrition](#)
- USAID Advancing Nutrition Nigeria State Committee on Food and Nutrition Capacity Assessment Reports: [Bauchi](#), [Kebbi](#), [Sokoto](#)
- [Capacity Strengthening Plan for the National Working Group on Food Fortification \(NWGFF\) in Uganda](#)
- Policy Briefs Demonstrating the Value of Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Investments: [Kakamega](#), [Kisumu](#), [Kitui](#)
- Ghana Multi-Sector Food and Nutrition Security Guidelines for Integrating Food and Nutrition Security Interventions in Development Plans
- District Nutrition Coordination Committee Monitoring and Supportive Supervision Checklist

Conclusion

USAID Advancing Nutrition believes in the importance of strengthening governance for nutrition and has invested significantly in doing so—for planning, financing, and implementation of multi-sectoral nutrition actions. Based on our experiences and lessons learned, we have identified several high-level recommendations:

For Implementing Partners

- Adaptation to context is important, but you do not need to reinvent the wheel. Develop guidance and facilitate opportunities to share templates and examples across districts, projects, and countries.
- Allow sufficient time to co-create policies, guidance, plans, and budgets to ensure local ownership, tailor strategies to the local context, and can help support the sustainability of multi-sectoral action.
- Make clear the role and responsibilities of multi-sectoral committees and build in constructive activities to facilitate coordination and collaboration, such as routine reviews of outputs and outcomes, intersectoral or interdistrict learning events, or supervisory visits.
- Invest in the collection and use of nutrition data by integrating nutrition indicators into existing information systems to inform policy and improve accountability.
- Advocate for increased funding and strengthen systems for tracking funding allocations, releases, and expenditures.
- Engage the private sector in conversations about sustainable nutrition financing to help fill data gaps and address funding limitations.

For USAID

- Help to ensure policies are put into action by aligning activity designs and interventions with national and subnational nutrition plans and national planning and budgeting cycles ([USAID Advancing Nutrition 2020](#)).

- Give implementing partners the time needed to co-create activities with local stakeholders and to sustainably strengthen governance for nutrition.
- Facilitate collaboration between USAID-funded activities, organizing regular meetings to identify linkages between different streams of work.

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