

# Repositioning Nutrition in Uganda through Advocacy

The prevalence of malnutrition in Uganda has been unacceptably high for decades. However, until recently, malnutrition had not been a priority among policymakers and government leaders. Because of competing priorities for limited resources at the local and national levels, limited funds were allocated to nutrition services. Advocacy facilitated by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project (FANTA) helped raise awareness of the problem of malnutrition in the country, increased commitment to addressing malnutrition, and led to the launch of the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan.

## Advocacy Approach

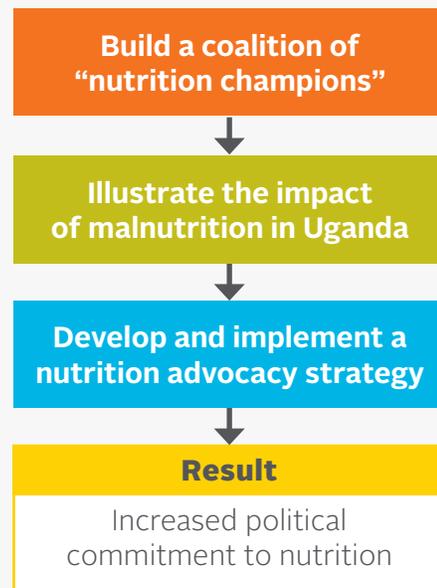
Coalition-building is key to conducting advocacy to raise awareness of nutrition. In Uganda, FANTA worked with the Ministry of Health to build a coalition of “nutrition champions” to build political and donor interest in improving nutrition and to advocate for an effective legislative framework for the implementation of nutrition activities. Members of the coalition included representatives from the National Planning Authority; ministries of health, agriculture, education, finance, and social development; local government; U.S. Agency for International Development implementing partners; civil society organizations; United Nations agencies; and academia including Makerere and Kyambogo universities.

One of the first steps for the coalition was to frame the impact of malnutrition in Uganda. FANTA used the PROFILES tool to show the benefits of improved nutrition and consequences if nutrition does not improve, based on country data for the period between 2006 to 2015. The PROFILES estimates highlighted that if the nutritional status of the population did not improve, economic

productivity losses for the country would be more than US\$2 billion and the number of infant and child deaths would be more than 500,000.

With this information in hand, the coalition developed and implemented a nutrition advocacy strategy. The strategy harnessed the data on nutrition to develop a package of materials that highlighted how malnutrition impacts health, education, agriculture, and economic productivity in Uganda. These materials were used as part of a nutrition advocacy campaign to engage stakeholders, such as government officials, media, development partners, and civil society, in the nutrition dialogue through meetings, training on nutrition, and participatory workshops.

### Key Steps Used to Raise Awareness of Nutrition in Uganda



Working in coalition helped leverage human and financial resources for the nutrition advocacy campaign and harmonize key messages to ensure that nutrition advocates were speaking in one coordinated voice.

## Increased Commitment to Nutrition

The efforts of the coalition brought attention to the severe consequences of malnutrition in the country and resulted in increased commitment to nutrition. For example, engaging with the media resulted in increased print and broadcast coverage of nutrition issues in Uganda, and a statement from the Minister of Health of political commitment to improve nutrition was published in a major daily newspaper.

At the government level, discussions with policymakers and politicians resulted in a statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs committing the Ugandan government to support the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement. In addition, for the first time, nutrition was included in Uganda's 5-year national development plan, and after holding consultative workshops to develop a strategic framework for nutrition in Uganda, the 2011–2016 Uganda Nutrition Action Plan was launched, which made improving nutrition the responsibility of all sectors. Finally, a formal multi-stakeholder nutrition working group was established with nutrition activities coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister and a nutritionist position was established in the local government structure.

*“We recognise that by ensuring that the mothers of Uganda and the children that they bear and care for are well nourished, we are establishing the best foundation for Uganda’s development. We acknowledge our responsibility to the people of Uganda to see that this foundation is solid. A Uganda in which all its citizens are well nourished is a legacy of which we can all be proud.”*

*—Excerpt from the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan Statement of Commitment*

The launch of the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan was a major milestone and has helped position the country to tackle challenges related to and affected by malnutrition. Since the launch of the plan, government sectors including gender, social development, agriculture, and local government have taken steps to integrate nutrition into their work, with FANTA's support. There has also been increased investment in nutrition by development partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

## Learn More

Read about our country-level nutrition advocacy at [www.fantaproject.org](http://www.fantaproject.org).



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