Annex: SPRING Pathways to Better Nutrition Qualitative Methods Uganda

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SPRING Project

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BACKGROUND

Objectives for Uganda Qualitative Research:

- To explore the processes through which various nutrition stakeholder institutions in-country prioritize their activities to support the rollout of the Uganda National Nutrition Plan (UNAP)
- To identify views and opinions of these stakeholders regarding the various aspects of UNAP roll-out and to inform and strengthen the rollout
- To explore the perceptions of these stakeholder institutions on Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) and UNAP
- To follow up with potential changes in the priorities over time, understand the rationales that support such changes, and analyze the potential impact of these changes that occur in the rollout process

METHODS

The Pathways to Better Nutrition (PBN) case study is a mixed method, prospective study. As an integral part of the case study research, qualitative data are collected throughout the course of the case study. The primary baseline data collection method is structured key informant interview (KII). A Grounded Theory Approach was taken to identify themes to code data while following the framework and key domains of inquiry for the global PBN case study. The KII questions are designed to capture the key informants' (KIs') responses so that the case study team can obtain a thorough understanding of the issues stated in the aforementioned objectives, as well as the following key domains of inquiry of the overall case study (below) over time. These domains cut across the following objective areas:

- Learning, adaptation, and evidence on scale-up
- Adaptation of innovations/interventions to local context(s)
- Financing of nutrition-sensitive (sector level) and -specific (within sector) activities
- Long-term planning for sustainability

Baseline

Recruiting Key Informants

National Level

Study research questions centered on how the activities proposed in UNAP were being prioritized and funded by each key stakeholder institution while UNAP is being rolled out. Individuals had to meet at least one or more of the following criteria to be considered KIs:

- They were involved in developing UNAP or were well versed in its objectives if not previously involved.
- They had designated roles in the rollout of UNAP within or beyond their specific institutional affiliations.
- They actively participated in or had significant influence in the implementation of UNAP.

In addition, potential KIs needed to be affiliated with the key nutrition stakeholder institutions in Uganda. SUN categorized these institutions into six groups (SUN 2010):

- Government
- Donor agencies (bilateral and multilateral aid agencies)
- Civil society organizations (CSOs)
- Business/private sector
- United Nation (UN) groups
- Academic/research institutions

As a result, the final KIs were chosen based on the following attributes:

- They were known nutrition focal persons affiliated with one of the stakeholder groups.
- They were recognized technical experts and opinion leaders based on the case study team's in-country consultants' knowledge.
- They were listed as UNAP technical committee members (Annex IV in UNAP document).
- They were available and willing to be interviewed by the case study team.

Sampling was purposive, and the sample for KIs included representatives of all six key stakeholder groups. Certain considerations were taken into account: Representatives from all UNAP government sectors had to be included. Representatives from the other stakeholder groups who play significant roles in Uganda's nutrition landscape also had to be included. The final list of KIs was determined through an iterative process between the case study team members in the Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) Home Office (HO) and country office.

SPRING case study country staff made phone calls and visits to the offices of the final list of KIs to schedule interviews. An introduction letter from SPRING and support letter from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) were delivered to the KIs to invite them to participate in the study.

District Level

The selection of district-level KIs aimed to have representatives from the six key stakeholder groups noted in the national section. A few modifications in the recruitment process were made to accommodate circumstances at the district level. First, all members of the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC) were included as KIs. Second, since few donor and UN agencies have representation at the district level, representatives of key projects funded by these agencies that operate in the selected case study districts were included as KIs for these groups. Third, community-level opinion leaders (religious leaders, elders, formal and informal practitioners and service providers and members of the private sector) as well as community-based organizations (CBOs) that may potentially influence district-level UNAP rollout were also included.

SPRING case study district research leads and short-term consultants paid an initial visit to the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and his technical team in both case study districts (Kisoro and Lira) to present the support letter from OPM and introduce the case study. The district research leads also presented the proposed KI list to the CAO's office and requested its support to approach and invite

the respective KIs, especially those affiliated with the district government, to participate in the interviews. The CAO's office and the DNCC focal person were also requested to advise on the existing nutrition partners/stakeholders in the district and how to contact them.

Basic Information of Key Informants

National Level

A total of 23 national-level KII were conducted during the case study's baseline. The KIs' group affiliations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Key informant interviews for PBN case study baseline data collection

Group / N	Government sector	Donor agency	UN group	CSO	Private sector	Research	Total
Interviews	11	2	6	2	1	1	**23**
Agencies	8	2	6	2	1	1	**20**

District Level

Table 2. Key informant interviews for PBN case study baseline data collection in Kisoro District

Group / N	Government sector	Donor agency	UN group	CSO/CBOs	Private sector	Research	**Total**
Interviews	11	0	0	5	0	0	**16**
Agencies	11	0	0	5	0	0	**16**

Table 3. Key informant interviews for PBN case study baseline data collection in Lira District

Group / N	Government sector	Donor agency	UN group	CSO/CBOs	Private sector	Research	**Total**
Interviews	16	0	2	10	2	1	**31**
Agencies	14	0	2	10	2	1	**29**

Key Informant Interview Guides

National Level

The national KII guide for baseline data collection was developed to capture information related to the objectives section above. The national KII guide includes three sections: knowledge of and current responsibilities related to UNAP rollout; processes and rationales to identify and budget for selected priority activities to implement UNAP; and perceptions of scaling up nutrition and its realization in Uganda through UNAP. Due to the differences in the functions that each stakeholder group assumes in support of UNAP, a core body of questions was developed that applies to all groups. Specific questions were developed to ask each group of stakeholders for their unique contribution to UNAP. Eventually six sets of the KII guide were developed following a similar structure.

The draft KII guide went through several rounds of deliberations and revisions among the case study team and the consultants. It also was pilot-tested with a national nutrition leader in-country to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the questions, as well as the time required to complete all the questions. The KII guide was then finalized after the inputs and feedback from the pilot test were incorporated.

District Level

At the district level, the KII guide adopted the overall structure of and many questions in the national KII guide. Modifications were made to bring UNAP and SUN closer to the local context. The first section of the district KII guide asked KIs' perceptions of the nutrition situation in their districts. Similarly, the last section of questions on the perceptions of scale-up and rollout of UNAP also focused KIs' attention on the district where they reside and work. Because each UNAP "early riser" district is required to establish a DNCC to lead the rollout, the questions regarding the prioritization and funding of the key UNAP-related activities centered on how those decisions were made (or to be made) by the DNCC. Therefore, most questions in this section were designed in a way that can be applied to various stakeholder groups in the district. A set of questions was directed specifically to government-sector KIs concerning their relationships with their ministerial counterparts in terms of setting priorities and negotiating budgets. The intention is to establish critical linkages between the national and district levels in UNAP implementation.

Both national- and district-levels KIIs are supported by the OPM. The research protocol and the national KII guide were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of John Snow, Inc. (JSI) in the USA and the IRB of Makerere University School of Public Health in Uganda.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

SPRING conducted the baseline national interviews in November 2013 in Kampala. The baseline district interviews were collected in Kisoro in May 2014 and in Lira in July–August 2014.

All national- and district-level KIIs were scheduled to occur in the KI's office and lasted for 30 to 80 minutes. The support letter from the OPM was presented to every KI. Each KI was requested to sign a written informed consent form to give the case study team permission to ask the KI questions and record the conversation. All KIs agreed to be interviewed, and all but two declined to be recorded. All signed consent forms were kept in a safe place and submitted to the IRB of Makerere University upon the completion of the data collection.

When permission was granted, the interviews were recorded with a Sony MP3 Portable Digital Voice Recorder (Model ICD-PX333 and 312). In addition, notes were taken by the case study team and consultants. Debriefing and review of notes were undertaken on the same day of the interviews. All hand notes were typed up within days of the interviews. All interviews were carried out and all notes were taken in English. The full notes were then produced based on the transcripts of the digital recordings in the following months. Each KI was assigned a code in the full notes. The recordings were erased from the recorder once they had been transferred to a computer for transcription. The file was permanently deleted from the computer once the transcription of notes was completed. The codes and the full notes are stored in a folder on the SPRING project's central portal, which is only accessible to authorized case study team members.

The full notes were verbatim transcription and prepared in Microsoft Word documents. First, they were manually examined for emerging themes before they were uploaded and processed in NVivo 10 (QSR International, Australia). Notes were then coded according to a list of key themes of interest to the case

study team. A few broad themes (i.e., master nodes for coding in NVivo 10 were first identified after the notes were reviewed. The coding was performed by a research analyst and reviewed by the qualitative lead of the case study team. The case study co-leads, then discussed and determined the key themes of the technical briefs for the case study. Sub-nodes were then developed according to either the existing conceptual framework or themes that emerged from the notes. These sub-nodes were then applied to the texts that were previously coded with the master nodes to identify and organize information to be used in the writing of the technical briefs.

SPRING adopted a Grounded Theory Approach to allow the key themes to emerge from the interview notes (Lingard, Albert, and Levinson 2008). During the initial review of the notes, special attention was made to emerging themes that were most aligned with the case study's primary concerns on the prioritization and funding of activities for the rollout of UNAP, as well as the key domains of the case study. SPRING will follow up on these relevant themes throughout the two-year period to document how priorities and funding evolve, as described below. All technical briefs will incorporate data available up to date by the time the briefs are written. Results will not be considered final until the end of the study period, as documented by the final study report.

Follow-Up Plan

Key Informants

It is understood that due to changes of personnel in the government and other stakeholder groups, some KIs who had been interviewed in the baseline will likely not serve the same role throughout the course of this prospective study. Therefore, the case study will follow the incumbents of the "positions," not the individual KIs. The in-country case study researchers are themselves active members in the country's nutrition community. They will closely observe the personnel changes of KI positions, so follow-up interviews can be scheduled with the right persons. With any new interviewee, the same procedures will be followed regarding introduction letters and the signing and filing of the consent forms. In addition, there may be a need to add KIs from new organizations, if new funding or activities in nutrition come online during the study period. Both budget analysis and qualitative interviews will help identify any new KIs each budget cycle.

Data Sources

Since the case study is prospective and interested in documenting and understanding how priorities and budgets to support the rollout of UNAP evolve over time, the research team plans to follow up with relevant information through the following channels. Such information will trigger more targeted interviews with certain KIs primarily for clarification purposes.

- Events: including workshops, conferences, discussion meetings, and fora held that discuss UNAP; regular technical working groups associated with UNAP; and consultative meetings, etc. The SPRING in-country researcher team will try to participate in these events, take notes, and email the notes with their direct observations to the entire team. The team will also obtain materials that have been disseminated at these events or obtain meeting notes if SPRING cannot attend. Materials should be summarized following the main themes that have been identified from the baseline national KII and shared with the HQ research team.

- Newspaper: articles that mention partnerships among nutrition- specific and -sensitive sectors; new funding commitment from the donors, UN agencies, and the government sectors; debates about UNAP design and implementation; sociopolitical, natural, cultural, and economic changes in-country that may impact the rollout of UNAP. Such news should be captured and summarized by the case study analyst in HQ to inform the HQ and in-country team in the probing of relevant KIs for brief clarification interviews and/or the obtaining of additional information. Key findings should be then shared with the whole team. It is important to note that while the newspaper articles may be used and quoted in the research, the primary purpose of monitoring information from this source is to inform the study team about what to probe KIs on and when to probe them on specific happenings or events (alongside meetings and other event notes).
- Key documents: new and/or modified documents of UNAP-related strategies and implementation plans will be obtained and cited as needed for evidence of change in policy, plans, or implementation approach for the UNAP and/or nutrition activity budgets.

Data Collection, Management, and Analysis

The notes of meeting (often shared through emails) and associated communications internal to the research team and the newspaper articles will be saved in the same NVivo 10 file as the interview transcriptions and notes. They will also be coded in NVivo 10 following the broader themes. For longer documents, select passages or sections will be coded according to the case study's main research questions. Subsequent analysis will be performed similarly as described in the Baseline section. The list of master nodes and sub-nodes will be populated as new themes emerge from the data collection and analysis throughout the study. Data sources (e.g. meeting notes, reports, work plans, and newspapers) gathered by the team during the follow-up period will be sent to the HQ data analyst (one per country), who is responsible for managing and uploading sources into NVivo for coding and analysis. All data sources will be stored accordingly in the master NVivo 10 data file for each country. Since coding and analysis may be conducted by more than one analyst, individual NVivo 10 files will be periodically merged into the master file.

Endline

Key Informants and Key Informant Interview Guides (National and District Levels)

If resources and other conditions permit, the case study team plans to conduct a full round of endline KIIs at both the national and district levels. The goal is to re-visit the initial set of KIs (incumbents of the relevant positions, not the individuals) and additional individuals whose significance in the UNAP rollout emerged during the course of the case study. It is anticipated that the selection of the KIs and the design of the KII guides may need to be modified in the endline due to developments over time. Nonetheless, the design of the KII guides is expected to follow a reiterative process similar to that in the baseline to ensure that the questions asked are relevant to KIs from all stakeholder institutions and tightly built around the overall research questions of the case study.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Qualitative research methods have unique strengths and are appropriate to study a small number of cases in depth. They are also appropriate to describe and explain a complex process, such as implementing a country's scale-up nutrition plan. For a longitudinal case study, qualitative methods

have the flexibility to be responsive to changes in the field contexts, improving the utility of the findings and recommendations through adaptation of data collection instruments and analysis. Asking the same questions to different individuals helps to detect discrepancies on accounts of facts and sequences, triangulate information to reach a consensus, and collect views and opinions, which could be potentially divergent, on the implementation of national rollout. Such an exercise will reveal insights into why things are moving or not, and potential resolutions to challenges in the rollout.

Some general weaknesses of qualitative research also apply in this case study, namely that it has a small sample size and is relatively resource intensive. Perhaps the most concerning one is that the results may not be directly generalizable to the other countries. The case study will focus the discussions on the cross-contextual issues (themes), so domestic and global users of our research outputs can appreciate the challenges and innovations we augment in Uganda. In addition, the users will also benefit from seeing how systematic research can generate observations and identify opportunities that can be capitalized to strengthen the rollout.

Strengths and Limitations of the quantitative portion of this study are addressed in the Budget Methods Annex and Snapshot Methods Annex. Please see www.spring-nutrition.org for these documents.

REFERENCES

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