

THE UGANDA NUTRITION FELLOWSHIP 2015–2016

Creating Leaders in Nutrition

The Uganda Nutrition Fellowship (UNF), implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA), is an 18-month program with the aim of developing skilled professionals who can effectively envision and implement the nutrition agenda in Uganda. Through a unique mix of practical experience and professional development activities designed to build leadership, management, and technical expertise, young nutrition graduates hone professional skills and are empowered to address nutrition challenges in Uganda. Meanwhile, host organizations benefit from having highly motivated and well-qualified young professionals supporting their efforts to implement the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP).

The UNF, in its second cycle, has placed 12 Fellows in nine host organizations and government agencies. The Fellows are multi-talented, dedicated, and self-driven individuals with diverse skills. Working with their host organizations, Fellows engage in a wide variety of activities, including nutrition assessment, counselling, and treatment as well as policy development, advocacy, and behaviour change communication with key target audiences. In addition, they learn about various nutrition initiatives and have access to networking opportunities and online courses.

Throughout the program, FANTA staff support the Fellows through an orientation, mentorship, site visits, team-building retreats, and a series of professional development workshops. Fellows also receive mentorship, supervision, and career support from staff at their host organizations. Through this experience, Fellows are expected to develop strong skills in communication, writing, accountability, and leadership, as well as program design and implementation, coordination, advocacy, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

The Host Organizations

Host organizations were competitively selected based on their willingness to provide a supportive learning environment and their commitment to scaling up the implementation of nutrition interventions outlined in the UNAP. The host organizations include the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries; Mwanamugimu Nutrition Unit, Mulago Hospital; World Vision Uganda; International Baby Food Action Network; and the following USAID-funded projects: FANTA; Communication for Healthy Communities (CHC); Community Connector; and Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING).



MEET THE NUTRITION FELLOWS

Began Fellowship: April 2015

Expected Graduation Date: October 2016



'Working at World Vision Uganda has helped me learn different ways of disseminating health information to different audiences.'

BRIDGET KEZAABU

Bachelor of Science in Food Processing Technology, Kyambogo University, 2014

Host Organization: World Vision Uganda

Bridget supports the implementation of maternal, newborn, and child health activities in the Amuru district. She assists with developing training materials and key messages for nutrition care group leaders and provides monthly support supervision for facility health workers. In addition, she plays a key role in planning and budgeting for World Vision Uganda activities.

Bridget has always had a passion for healthy living and her career choice was inspired by encounters with children and peers who lacked access to adequate nutrition. She wishes to make an impact and be part of making Uganda a healthier country. During the fellowship, she would like to support World Vision Uganda to improve the health and nutrition of women and children in Northern Uganda while developing her technical, teamwork, leadership, communication, and organizational skills.

APIO BENARDATE OKIRIA

Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Kyambogo University, 2015

Host Organization: Community Connector

Berna (as she is known) works in the Lira district and is part of the Community Connector team that oversees implementation of the Family Life Schools and the Schools Program. The Family Life Schools target communities to convey key information to mothers and caregivers during the first 1,000 days. The Schools Program ensures that nutrition messages are well packaged and delivered to schoolchildren. Berna and her team also write and record nutrition messages that are played on the Lira radio airwaves. In addition to the radio messages, Berna occasionally hosts health-related radio talk shows where she discusses nutrition.

It was not until she enrolled into the program at Kyambogo University that Berna understood the importance of nutrition. After university, she volunteered as a nutritionist in two different hospitals and on social media. She expects the UNF to groom her professionally for a career in nutrition.



'I am in the best placement as a young nutritionist; the Community Connector Project addresses a variety of aspects in nutrition. My skills in community nutrition have greatly improved.'

LYDIA PEDUN AISU

Bachelor of Science in Food Processing Technology, Kyambogo University, 2014

Host Organization: Communication for Healthy Communities (CHC)

Lydia is responsible for ensuring that nutrition is prioritized in the CHC *Obulamu* campaign, which focuses on reducing deaths related to HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria. She helps integrate nutrition into family planning and maternal and child health messages. She is currently playing a key role in the development of the '*Obulamu* Nutrition Guide', which is intended for village health teams and tailors nutrition messages for caretakers of children under 5 years of age.

Lydia, a cookery and art lover, developed a keen interest in nutrition while working at Mbale Regional Referral Hospital as a student trainee. Her interaction with malnourished children was so heartbreaking that her passion and desire to work in community nutrition grew. She expects the UNF to build her expertise in behaviour change communication, research, and report writing.



'I have learnt that having knowledge without the ability to pass it on in a simple way is a major setback in health communication. Communication for Healthy Communities has equipped me with the art of designing simple and applicable nutrition messages to specific audiences.'



'The environment at my host organization is very conducive for a young graduate like me who is building a career. I have learnt how to write concept notes and proposals, and how to build communication, teamwork, and leadership skills.'

MOSES KALUNGI

Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition, Makerere University, 2014

Host Organization: International Baby Food Action Network

Moses coordinates and supports operational planning and budgeting. He provides leadership and technical support to field staff that are implementing the Baby Friendly Health Facility Initiative. This includes providing mentorship and training of health facility workers.

Moses, a basketball fan, became interested in nutrition after a long battle with weight gain. His desire to pursue athletic endeavours and maintain a healthy weight led him to read extensively about nutrition. He developed a passion for nutrition and knew exactly what he wanted to study once he got to university. He expects the UNF to boost his knowledge and skills in nutrition planning, advocacy, and policy development.

HILLARY BYAMUGISA

Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology,
Makerere University, 2013

**Host Organization: Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry
and Fisheries**

Hillary works with colleagues at the Ministry to develop training materials for agricultural extension officers. He also provides nutrition expertise at departmental and stakeholder meetings.

As a young man trying to build a career after graduating from Makerere University, Hillary visited communities to conduct dietary assessments. During his interaction with different people he discovered that there is a big knowledge gap in nutrition. To be part of the team bridging this gap, he decided to take on community nutrition as a speciality. He expects to acquire better writing, project planning, and implementation skills through the UNF.



'I have had the opportunity to participate in the development of the Agriculture Sector Plan (2015–2020). I now understand how sector plans are developed and that sector plans guide departments in developing their work plans.'



PHOEBE NABUNYA

Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition, Makerere University,
2014

**Host Organization: Mwanamugimu Nutrition Unit, Mulago
Hospital**

Phoebe assesses the nutritional status of incoming patients and admits them to inpatient or outpatient therapeutic care. She also provides patients with nutrition counselling and education. In addition to her work with patients, she conducts trainings for university students completing their internship at the nutrition ward.

'So far, the fellowship program has been very educational. I have developed practical skills in clinical nutrition and my communication skills are much better.'

Phoebe became interested in nutrition from the age of 6 when her adolescent cousin gave birth to a child who later died of malnutrition. At that time, this was thought to be witchcraft. This tragedy left a lot of questions in her mind so she decided to study nutrition at university in order to better understand the subject. By the end of the UNF, she expects to have improved organizational, report-writing, recordkeeping, research, and communication skills. During her free time, Phoebe enjoys travelling and exploring new places.

ESTHER KUSURO

Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition, Makerere University, 2015

Host Organization: Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA)

Esther is part of the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC) coordination team at FANTA where she is supporting the 10 pilot DNCC districts to ensure their nutrition action plans are finalized. She also actively supports and participates in events, workshops, and meetings organized by FANTA.

Esther became interested in nutrition while working as a nursing officer in a hospital. While in this position she discovered that the majority of her patients did not die of the primary disease that brought them to hospital, but from malnutrition-related complications. She decided to enrol in the nutrition program at Makerere University to equip herself with advocacy and capacity-building skills in the field of nutrition. She expects to come out of the UNF program as a skilled and competent nutritionist in the areas of nutrition advocacy and capacity building. Esther enjoys swimming and adventure during her free time.



'My host organization has made me understand that advocacy is a fundamental aspect in achieving better nutrition in Uganda.'



'So far I have learnt a lot and there is still a lot to learn in the Community Connector Project. I have developed competencies in organizing and conducting workshops and field activities, I have also improved communication and networking skills. I am very grateful to FANTA for this golden opportunity.'

Haidar Luboobi

Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology, Makerere University, 2015

Host Organization: Community Connector

Haidar is part of the behaviour change communication team that oversees implementation of the Family Life Schools and the Schools Program. The Family Life Schools target communities with messages about the first 1,000 days and the Schools Program works to ensure nutrition messages are well packaged and delivered to schoolchildren. Haidar has also had the opportunity to record nutrition messages for local radio stations in the Lira district and participates in radio talk shows.

Haidar's interest in nutrition developed in high school when he dared to take on home economics, a girl-dominated class, and found the unit on nutrition extremely interesting. He made a choice to pursue Food Science and Technology at Makerere University in hopes of making a difference in the nutrition situation in Uganda. Through the UNF, he expects to gain experience in conducting nutrition field activities, supporting communities through behaviour change, and leading training sessions. Haidar is a soccer fanatic who also loves swimming and reading in his free time.



‘The experience I have had in the clinical setting has made me develop a passion to major in nutrition because of my desire to better understand nutrition.’

POLLINE KABENGANO

Bachelor of Science in Food Processing Technology, Kyambogo University, 2014

Host Organization: Mwanamugimu Nutrition Unit, Mulago Hospital

Polline wears many hats at the hospital. She admits patients, completes physical assessments of malnourished patients, follows up with them after their discharge, provides counselling and nutrition education, and educates new mothers on optimal feeding practices for infants and young children. She also conducts trainings for external organizations that come to visit the nutrition unit. In addition to these responsibilities, Polline is responsible for cooking and kitchen gardening demonstrations for patients and caregivers who come to the nutrition ward.

Polline developed an interest in nutrition at university after studying community nutrition, malnutrition, and its consequences in society. From her UNF experience, she expects to obtain practical skills in the management of malnutrition in the clinical setting and to improve her communication skills. Besides nutrition, Polline is also passionate about agriculture, and she grows crops and raises animals.

WINNIE NAMBASSA

Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology, Makerere University, 2014

Host Organization: Ministry of Health, Nutrition Unit

Winnie participates in budgeting and planning meetings at the Ministry and helps draft speeches to be presented on behalf of the Ministry at events and meetings. She works on several activities including child health days, infant and young child feeding, integrated management of acute malnutrition, micronutrients and fortification, and monitoring and evaluation. This includes reviewing policy briefs and reports, as well as organizing workshops and reviewing program guidelines.

Winnie first became interested in nutrition in high school after learning about the way food components interact in the body. She was intrigued and eager to learn more about nutrition and health. With the UNF program, she expects to learn how to integrate nutrition in culture, how policies have impacted some of the nutrition gaps in the country, and how to improve her research skills, as well as gain valuable work experience.



‘One thing I now appreciate is that the policies we make effect the country either positively or negatively and these policies can actually be changed from time to time for the better.’

BRENDAH NANTEZA

Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology, Makerere University, 2015

Host Organization: Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING)

Brendah is part of the technical team in the Namutumba district that supports integration of nutrition assessment, counselling, and support in facilities and communities. She participates in routine data collection from health facilities and village health teams and provides support supervision for their activities. She is also a trainer-of-trainers for the micronutrient powder messaging and delivery campaign.

During her undergraduate field training, Brenda was introduced to practical aspects of nutrition, project management, and advocacy. This is when she was convinced that the nutrition sector had diverse opportunities when integrated with food science. She expects the UNF to enable her to gain practical skills such as coordination, teamwork, research, advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation. Brenda is also passionate about travelling.



'SPRING has taught me the "art of learning by doing". I am fully involved in the daily activities of the project such as nutrition education, food demonstrations, meetings, and writing reports.'



'Working at the Ministry of Health has made me appreciate the critical role nutrition plays in people living with HIV, and yet it's often ignored. I now appreciate the need for more advocacy for improved nutrition.'

DEBORAH FAITH NABALAYO

Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Nutrition, UCSI University of Malaysia

Host Organization: Ministry of Health, AIDS Control Program (ACP)

Deborah coordinates nutrition-related activities for the ACP. She represents the ACP at key meetings, seminars, and workshops, and supports documentation of nutrition-related activities by serving as a rapporteur and writing reports.

Deborah has always had a desire to work in the health sector, specifically in nutrition. She expects the UNF to provide her with real-world work experience as well as opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and professional relationships, which will enable her to compete favourably in the job market. During her free time, Deborah enjoys singing, dancing, and reading.

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