



The Republic of Uganda

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Concept Note

3rd National Nutrition Forum (NNF) May 2024

Theme:

Unlocking Nutrition's Potential:

*Accelerating Multisectoral Actions and Strategic Investments for Enhanced
Nutrition Security*

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Introduction

Since 2013, the Government and its partners have been organizing the National Nutrition Forum, a multistakeholder platform that brings together all nutrition stakeholders in the country. This forum is the highest level of engagement on nutrition by all stakeholders. Every two and a half years, the forum is convened and presided over by the Right Honourable Prime Minister to assess the implementation of the halfway period for the UNAP. The forum brings together all heads of government departments and agencies, ambassadors, development partners, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia.

This year, in 2024, the National Nutrition Forum will be held in a world facing multiple, complex, and cascading challenges that adversely impact human well-being and nutrition. The forum will provide an opportunity for local, national, and international delegates from across various sectors to come together and increase their efforts to promote compelling and evidence-based agendas that strengthen the resilience of people in the face of rising economic issues, climate change, food insecurity, among other things.

2.0. The Policy Context

At the policy forefront, the Third National Development Plan (NDP III) emphasizes investing in population, health, nutrition, early childhood development, sanitation, hygiene, and basic education. These investments are seen as crucial for building resilience and forming the foundation for human capital development. Good nutrition, a critical aspect of health and development, is associated with improved child and maternal health, stronger immune systems, and a lower risk of non-communicable diseases. It is a crucial driver of productivity and plays a significant role in breaking the cycles of poverty and hunger.

The Uganda Cost of Hunger in Africa Study (COHA) suggests that reducing child undernutrition by half by 2025 could result in an annual average saving of Ug. Shs. 176bn for the country. Furthermore, reducing stunting levels to 10% and underweight to 5% could lead to an average saving of 260bn. Malnutrition poses significant health risks, especially in low-income countries like Uganda.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 24% of Ugandan children under 5 years are stunted, 3.2% are wasting, and 10% of newborns are of low birth weight. Additionally, 3.4% of children under 5 years are overweight. Among adults, 18% of women and 9.2% of men are overweight, while 8.4% of women and 1.5% of men are obese. Anemia affects 53% of children under 5 years and 32% of women of reproductive age. Currently, the five major non-communicable diseases (NCDs)—chronic respiratory illnesses, diabetes, cancer, mental health disorders, and substance abuse—account for 33% of Uganda's annual mortality.

The second Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP II) outlines government actions to address the nutritional needs of all population groups in Uganda, with a particular focus on infants, young children, school-age children, adolescents, women of reproductive age, and other vulnerable groups. The plan adopts a multi-sectoral approach to implementing and

coordinating nutrition actions and aligns with the aspirations of existing legal and policy frameworks and initiatives at the national, regional, and global levels.

Globally, through Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, UN Member States have acknowledged that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires adequate and sustained investments in good nutrition. The ambition to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture' is encapsulated in SDG 2. However, at least 12 of the 17 Goals contain indicators highly relevant to nutrition, and better nutrition is directly related to 70% of the SDGs.

The Uganda SDG Voluntary National Review 2020 indicates that the past decade has seen progress in improving the nutritional status of children in Uganda. The prevalence of stunting among children under five has declined from 33% in 2011 to 29% in 2016, with the highest prevalence among children in rural areas (30%) compared to urban areas (24%). However, the absolute number of 2.4 million stunted children remains high, necessitating investment in nutrition support for malnourished children and intersectoral collaborations and partnerships for nutrition.

As a Member State of the African Union, Uganda commits itself to the AU nutrition commitments, which include institutionalizing the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS), the African Day of School Feeding, and the Continental Accountability Nutrition Scorecard as a tool to promote accountability for achieving nutrition security. In addition to these commitments, the UNAP II aligns Uganda with the African Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS) 2015-2025, which provides guidance on nutrition policies and programs.

3.0. The 3rd National Nutrition Forum

The 3rd National Nutrition Forum aims to promote integrated policy research and identify innovative policy solutions and investments for nutrition interventions. This will help accelerate progress toward national nutrition targets and development goals.

The National Nutrition Forum's strategic objective is to be recognized as a premier international forum that showcases new developments in the field of nutrition in Uganda. It aims to share new ideas among stakeholders, disseminate research results and development experiences, provide networking opportunities, and strengthen existing connections while forging new ones. The outcomes of the 3rd National Nutrition Forum will also enhance the effective implementation and achievement of UNAP II targets.

The Office of the Prime Minister will be organizing the 3rd National Nutrition Forum through its implementation coordination role. The main agenda of the forum is to bring together leading practitioners, industry leaders, policymakers, business professionals, and academics in the field of food and nutrition to generate practical solutions for the current challenges in this field.

The Forum will feature Oral presentations, poster presentations/ exhibition, Panel discussions, workshops, Lightning talks, roundtable discussions and virtual presentations. This is an opportunity for all state and non-state actors in the nutrition sector to come together under the multi-sectoral nutrition accountability framework. The forum will also explore and develop

accelerated actions, financing, and expenditure tracking for efficient implementation and monitoring of nutrition interventions.

4.0 Rationale for the 3rd National Nutrition Forum

The National Nutrition Forum (NNF) is a partnership platform that brings together all stakeholders involved in the scaling up nutrition (SUN) network. The scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement recognises 5 SUN platforms/networks (Government led platform, civil society network, Development partners' network, Research and Academia network and the Business network. All this 5 networks are active in Uganda and coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister.

The first National Nutrition Forum was held on 3rd December 2013, and the second one on 15th March 2018. During these forums, challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned were shared, and commitments to the multisectoral strategy of scaling up nutrition in Uganda were reaffirmed. Additionally, recommendations for action by different actors at various levels were proposed.

The third NNF will provide an opportunity for the nutrition community to take stock of what has been achieved within the context of the 2nd National Nutrition Forum outcomes, national planning frameworks such as NDPII and NDPIII, and reflect on the successes, lessons learned, and good practices to sustain the momentum towards ending malnutrition in all its forms in Uganda.

Furthermore, the implementation of the second Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAPII) requires the Government to work closely with its partners in a well-coordinated approach. The NNF is the platform that supports the delivery of effective nutrition outcomes across the country.

5.0 Theme and Sub-Themes:

Theme: Unlocking Nutrition's Potential: Accelerating Multisectoral Actions and Strategic Investments for Enhanced Nutrition Security.

This statement emphasizes the importance of a 'multisectoral approach' in ending the problem of malnutrition. It is essential for different actors, sectors, and systems to collaborate to reduce malnutrition, more so now than ever before. Despite being halfway through the SDGs journey to 2030, the world is off-track towards achieving the set targets. Additionally, Uganda is facing various post-Covid 19 recovery issues that are affecting the achievement of nutrition targets. As the NDP IV process begins, there is a chance to develop a more robust nutrition framework.

Sub-Themes

A. Food and Nutrition Security

Exploring the intricate link between food and nutrition security and climate change, this theme addresses the ongoing challenges in parts of Uganda, where climate-related factors such as heavy rains, floods, and droughts are diminishing crop yields, limiting access to nutritious food. Climate change is not only reducing the nutritional value of staple crops but also making them more vulnerable to shocks, resulting in diminished quantity and quality of yields.

The imperative lies in formulating policies and implementing practices that enhance food and nutrition security. The focus is on increasing production and access to diverse, nutritious foods through a sustainable food system while concurrently safeguarding the environment from degradation.

Participants in this theme will delve into issues surrounding food production across the entire food system, the commercialization of agriculture, environmental protection, and factors compromising food and nutrition security. Despite investments from the Government of Uganda, Development Partners, NGOs, the private sector, and academia, challenges persist in meeting the nutritional needs of the country's growing population.

B. Catalyzing Change: The Links of Nutrition and Healthcare Initiatives

Integrating nutrition services into healthcare services, whether public or private, is crucial to achieving significant mutual benefits. The triple burden of malnutrition is intertwined with health-related issues. Diseases lead to poor nutrition, which in turn leads to non-communicable diseases and other challenging health issues, including metabolic syndrome (high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity) and various types of cancers. This is affecting the GDP of the country indirectly, so it is crucial for the forum to discuss the connections between disease and nutrition and its impact on the country's economy. This way, we can ensure a strong systems approach to improving healthcare systems, the economy, and the quality of life for Ugandans.

Under this theme, we will make a deliberate effort to share knowledge regarding research findings and advances in healthcare related to nutrition-related diseases, the use of alternative medicines, and approaches to address some of these diseases. We will also focus on developing a healthy workforce for generations to come.

Our goal under this theme is to promote optimal nutrition through targeted investments in health systems, synergizing scientific knowledge, and implementing preventive strategies to mitigate the risk of non-communicable diseases for holistic well-being. The discussion outcomes will provide a clear perspective on how to implement health and nutrition-related policies effectively developed to attain the objectives of Vision 2040.

C. Nutrition Security in Refugee Contexts: Strategies for Sustainable Humanitarian Response

Nutrition is a crucial aspect in ensuring the survival and well-being of people affected by humanitarian crises and disasters. Uganda is one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world and is prone to various natural and man-made disasters. Therefore, it is essential to develop effective and sustainable practices in nutrition-related response within these settings to support affected communities.

Under this theme, stakeholders will exchange knowledge and skills to promote nutrition security in complex humanitarian and disaster settings. Participants will explore ways to assess malnutrition qualitatively and quantitatively, identify underlying causes and challenges, plan suitable interventions, and monitor malnutrition in affected communities. The focus will be on marginalized and vulnerable groups, and the use of locally available resources to ensure sustainability.

Furthermore, participants will consider initiatives that cater to the nutritional needs of specific populations and identify strategies to reduce disparities in access to nutritious food. The outcomes of these discussions will help develop a clear and sustainable humanitarian response to crisis and common nutritional interventions that can be used in policy discussions under multistakeholder platforms such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and during disaster response.

D. Sustaining Minds, Building Futures: Nutrition in Uganda's Education

The education system in Uganda comprises both formal and non-formal education both of which are vital for acquiring knowledge. Although formal education often receives more attention, a significant number of Ugandans still rely on the informal sector for education.

Despite the government's efforts to provide universal primary and secondary education, one of the major challenges facing the education system is the high rate of school dropouts. This is caused by various factors such as poor nutrition during early childhood, difficulties in implementing the school feeding program, teenage pregnancies, poverty leading to child labor, and others.

To address this issue, the government is developing and implementing a school feeding program to support school retention. Research shows that good nutrition is essential for children's intellectual development, and school-based nutrition programs are an effective way to promote nutritious diets and transfer nutrition-related knowledge through skills-based education. Moreover, such programs provide jobs for women and youth, markets for farmers, and help break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty.

Adequate feeding is also crucial for a child's overall development, including their ability to retain and apply knowledge in school and beyond. This, in turn, affects the quality of parents in our communities and the long-term nutritional status of children.

Therefore, it is essential to document and share knowledge and experiences related to the role of nutrition in education, school feeding, feeding children of school age, and the development of a productive workforce in Uganda. Efforts should be made to develop sustainable nutrition-friendly schools and school feeding programs in Uganda.

E. Innovative Financing for Nutrition

Uganda, like many other countries, has been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. As the nation attempts to move forward into the post-Covid recovery phase, it faces the arduous task of rebuilding food and health systems that were severely disrupted. This disruption has resulted in the growing prevalence of malnutrition in children under the age of five. Additionally, the demand for nutrition-specific financing has increased, making it even more challenging to address the urgent health and nutritional needs. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to nutrition, an estimated \$50 billion is needed worldwide.

With financing from both development partners and domestic resources at an all-time low, the National Nutrition Forum will focus on innovative financing as the most promising way forward. The theme of the forum is to explore and identify untapped opportunities for scaling up innovative financing of nutrition in Uganda.

The forum will include discussions on a wide range of financing mechanisms, including contributions, catalytic funds, and other innovative approaches. Participants will engage in a comprehensive exploration of novel funding mechanisms and critically evaluate and brainstorm new and unconventional avenues for financing nutrition-based programs. The goal is to identify innovative strategies that can effectively address the urgent and evolving needs arising from the post-Covid landscape.

The session will also feature successful public-private partnerships in nutrition investments, providing insights into collaborative approaches that have yielded positive outcomes, which can be replicated and scaled. The forum will also discuss the role of impact investment and philanthropy in supporting nutrition initiatives. Participants will explore how these financial models can contribute to sustainable and impactful solutions in the recovery phase and beyond.

F. Partnerships for Nutrition Governance

The sub-theme underscores the integral role of partnerships in shaping Uganda's nutrition landscape. This commitment is evident in initiatives such as the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP), which is currently in its second life cycle. The focus of this sub-theme is to delve into the critical aspects of fostering robust nutritional

governance frameworks, incorporating policies and regulatory bodies through collaborative efforts.

Partnerships play a critical role in strengthening the nutritional governance structures in Uganda. The exploration will encompass discussions on nutrition-related policies, regulatory bodies, and the role of partnerships in their formulation and execution. A core objective is to understand the multifaceted nature of nutrition challenges, acknowledging the involvement of government, private sector, academia, and civil society actors in addressing these issues.

The discussion will span across diverse disciplines such as food science and manufacturing, agriculture, public health, trade, education, economy, social sciences, and more. Recognizing the multisectoral nature of nutrition issues, the session will facilitate conversations to illuminate the varied perspectives, competing interests, and diverse worldviews that often influence different approaches to nutrition.

The emphasis of this sub-theme is to craft a comprehensive and robust partnership framework. By doing so, aiming to actively contribute to the cultivation of a resilient nutrition governance architecture in Uganda. Through collaborative efforts, the forum seeks to foster an environment where partnerships become instrumental in shaping and implementing effective policies and regulatory measures that address the multifaceted challenges inherent in the realm of nutrition.

3.0 Objectives of the 3rd National Nutrition Forum 2023

The objectives of the forum are:

- i. To take stock of the progress made in the implementation of UNAP II commitments on nutrition security in Uganda
- ii. To facilitate broad-based dialogue and networking among all relevant stakeholders
- iii. To generate practical solutions and pathways for accelerating the achievement of sustainable optimal nutrition results
- iv. Develop actions for accelerated delivery of UNAP II in the short and medium terms with the context of NDPIV and the midpoint of the SDGs

4.0 Expected Output

- i. The 3rd National Nutrition Forum Report (including technical papers and forum proceedings).
- ii. 3rd National Nutrition Forum Declaration and Outcome Document (to be read at the closing ceremony and form the basis for collective action by all stakeholders).

5.0 Date

The 3rd NNF is scheduled for the last week of May 2024 and hosted by the Rt. Hon Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda. The regional dialogues will be conducted within March-April 2024. A schedule and specific dates for the regional and national dates will be agreed with the National Organizing Committee.

6.0 Participation

The participants will be drawn from; Ministers, Political leaders, Government Ministries Departments and Agencies, Local governments, development partners, civil society , academia private sector, cultural and religious leaders and communities at local level .

It's envisaged that key international speakers will also participate in this forum.

7.0 Forum Methodology

The National Nutrition Forum (NNF) will be implemented through a two-tier approach, with engagements at the national and regional levels.

The Regional Nutrition Forum engagements.At the regional level, 15 districts will be selected following malnutrition parameters of stunting, anemia, obesity and exclusive breastfeeding. A Barraza approach will be used to get to get views from the community members.

The National Nutrition Forum will be a five-day event. The first day will comprise the Opening Ceremony of the National Nutrition Forum and National Nutrition Exhibition. The second, third and fourth days will be dedicated to technical dialogues on the themes of the forum facilitated through breakaway thematic symposiums. During these sessions, detailed discussions, paper presentations, studies, and other activities will take place. On the fifth day, the event will culminate in the closing ceremony of the National Nutrition Forum, which will be led by the political leadership. At this ceremony, the outcome document will be delivered.

The event will be attended by all relevant stakeholders and policymakers from all sectors and sections of society, including Members of Parliament, CSOs, women's groups, youth groups, farmer organizations, professional and academic institutions and associations, private sector, and international organizations.

Communication and Visibility Plan

Developing a communication plan is an essential aspect of ensuring the success of any event or project. The communication plan for the Forum will play a significant role in providing stakeholders and the general public with timely and relevant information about the event. It will involve the use of various communication mediums to ensure that information reaches the target audience effectively.

By clearly indicating the specifics of events and information to be communicated, the communication plan will ensure that stakeholders are aware of the Forum's objectives, theme, and agenda. It will also help to identify the target audience and the best medium to use to reach

them. For instance, email might be used to communicate with the participants while social media might be more effective in reaching out to the general public.

The communication plan will also include monitoring and assessment methods to ensure that the communication initiatives are effective. This will help in identifying areas that require improvement and make adjustments as needed.

In addition to the Forum website, developing a Forum link on the OPM website will provide stakeholders and the public with continuous information about the Forum. This will help to build their interest in the event and encourage active participation. The link will include details about paper submission, abstracts, promotions, and registration, making it easy for interested parties to access the necessary information and materials.

7.0 Organising Committee

An organizing committee/task team comprising of representatives from the Government, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia, and Development Partners will be established to lead the preparations for this Forum. The organizing committee will have sub-committees to support its work, including:

- i. Technical paper production and Documentation and learning
- ii. Venue, exhibitions, protocol and events management
- iii. Communications and visibility, including media and videography
- iv. Budget committee

Each sub-committee will have specific responsibilities related to their area of expertise.

8.0 Financing and Resource Mobilisation

The estimated total cost of the Forum is UGX 1,073,550,000 (One Billion, Seventy-Three Million, Five Hundred and Fifty Thousand Shillings) which is equivalent to USD 290,109. This cost has been detailed in the budget provided below. The budget is expected to be financed by various stakeholders.

