



2024 NUTRITION FORUM REPORT

Theme:

Addressing Coordination Bottlenecks in Nigeria

FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION OUTCOMES



11TH SEPTEMBER 2024



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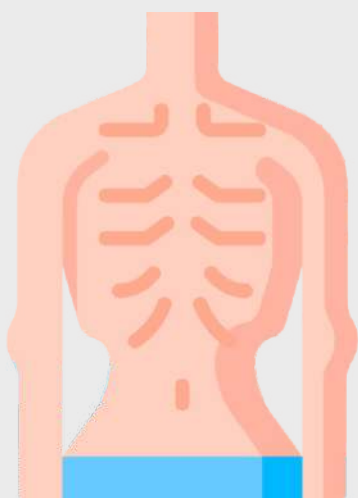
INTRODUCTION

Improving nutrition outcomes is crucial for advancing maternal and child health, ensuring safer pregnancies and childbirth, building stronger immune systems, , mitigating the risk of non-communicable diseases and promoting longevity. On the contrary, malnutrition in all its forms, poses significant threats to human health.

The 2023 Global Hunger Index reports that Nigeria currently ranks 109th out of 129 countries. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), in Northeast and Northwest Nigeria, 4.41 million children aged 0-59 months are acutely malnourished, 1.04 million with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 3.37 million with Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). Across Nigeria, the October 2024 Cadre Harmonisé analysis projects that about 26.5 million people will grapple with high levels of food insecurity in 2024.



The 2023 Global Hunger Index reports that **Nigeria** currently ranks **109th** out of **129** countries.



4.41 million

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), in Northeast and Northwest Nigeria, **4.41 million** children aged 0-59 months are acutely malnourished.

In 2021, the National Council on Nutrition (NCN) launched the National Multisectoral Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition to drive a multisectoral implementation of policies and programmes to combat hunger and malnutrition across all sectors in Nigeria, offering a roadmap for coordinating and expanding access to nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions by 2025. However, research indicates that fragmentations in nutrition coordination in Nigeria have posed challenges to significant progress of nutrition programmes.

To this end, the 2024 Nutrition consultative forum themed “Addressing Coordination Bottlenecks in Nigeria for Improved Nutrition Outcomes” was convened to drive critical discussions targeted at addressing these challenges that have plagued coordination of nutrition interventions in Nigeria and identify opportunities and strategies for improved coordination among stakeholders. The forum brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from the government at the national and sub-national level, healthcare providers, civil society organisations, the private sector, and development partners and at the end, learnings were shared and recommendations were proffered.

The subsequent sections of this report outline the key discussions that took place at the forum.

IMPACT REPORT

Social Media

The Nutrition Forum Report generated significant social media traffic, contributing to the event's overall visibility and engagement.

Key Metrics



Impressions

27,030



Engagements

4,319



Engagement Rate
(per Impression)

16%



Post Link Clicks

1,972

Attendance and Participation

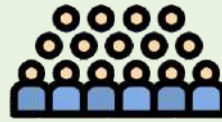


284

people registered
to attend the event



Forty-eight (48) participants attended physically accounting for **about 49% of total attendee**, while **forty-nine (49) attended virtually accounting for about 51% of total attendee**



About 68% of the physical attendee are from the NGO or Private sectors, about 24% are from the Government or Public sectors, 5% from the Media, and 3% from Tertiary institutions.

71%

of virtual attendee are from the NGOs or private sectors, 14% from the Government or Public sectors, 10% from the Media sector, and about 5% from the Tertiary sector.

Virtual Engagement

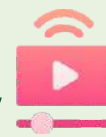
6,502

minutes total virtual
view time on Zoom.



127

total views on YouTube,
contributing to



10.7

hours of total view time
on YouTube as of 12th
October 2024.

Geographic Representation



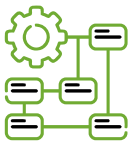
Most of our virtual attendees (**84%**) are Nigerian based, **8%** from the United Kingdom, **4%** from the United States, and **2%** from Cameroon and Israel, each.

Participants' Expectations

Participants expectations were analysed based on themes.



Nutrition challenges: Most participants were eager for the forum to address the bottlenecks and challenges impacting nutrition in Nigeria.



Coordination structures: Participants wanted to understand the coordination structures in place for nutrition in Nigeria



Stakeholder engagement: Participants looked forward to the level of stakeholder engagement particularly on providing innovative solutions that focus on improving nutrition outcomes.

Post-Dialogue Survey Analysis

A post-event survey was circulated to assess participants' experiences and identify areas for improvement for future events. We received a 100% completion rate of responses; the findings below were drawn based on the responses.



62.96%

of participants learned about the event through email invitations, followed by **19%** who found out via social media.



All participants
(100%)

reported having a **positive experience** at the Nutrition Consultative Forum.

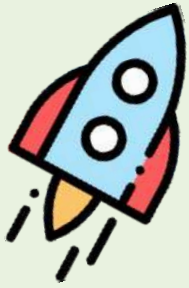
85%

of participants noted a significant increase in their understanding of nutrition coordination in Nigeria, while **15%** reported a moderate improvement in their understanding.



67%

of participants clearly understood the actionable recommendations for improving multisectoral coordination and the implementation of nutrition and food security programs in Nigeria, and **33%** had a moderate understanding of the recommendations.



89%

of participants indicated they would advocate for **enhanced nutrition coordination or take concrete actions** within their organizations to improve nutrition outcomes.



25%

of participants formed new partnerships during the event, **15%** strengthened existing partnerships, and **11%** established partnerships after the event. Additionally, **48%** did not form new partnerships but still found the discussions at the forum highly valuable.

The majority of participants
(78%)

preferred the **panel sessions 1 and 2** over other activities at the event.



78%

of participants felt more confident in **engaging with policymakers and stakeholders** to advocate for improved implementation of existing nutrition policies and plans following the forum.



100%

of participants expressed their likelihood to **collaborate with stakeholders** they met at the forum to strengthen nutrition coordination efforts.



37%

of participants are most likely to **implement or promote nutrition-strengthening initiatives** within their organizations or networks.



70%

of participants believe that the **recommendations and strategies** discussed during the forum will lead to long-term improvements in nutrition and food security programs in Nigeria.

WELCOME ADDRESS

Safiya Shuaibu

Deputy Director, Advocacy and Partnerships, Nigeria Health Watch



”

In Nigeria, we do not lack policies, programs, frameworks, or the necessary infrastructure to run an effective, multisectoral, coordinated response for nutrition. However, we lack communication, monitoring, and the united push as a united entity.”

- Safiya Shuaibu

This forum comes at a pivotal time as Nigeria's nutrition landscape demands well-designed programmes and strengthened coordination mechanisms to ensure the success of these programmes. The theme, addressing coordination bottlenecks in Nigeria for improved nutrition outcomes, underscores the importance of seamless collaboration among all key players in nutrition programming.

While the multisectoral nature of nutrition is well established across sectors, the real challenge lies in ensuring that these sectors communicate, collaborate, and work effectively. In improving coordination, it is also important to ensure that stakeholders push towards the realisation of the sector-wide approach under the Health Sector Renewal Investment Program.

The discussions in this forum aim to explore the bottlenecks that have slowed progress and develop actionable recommendations to address coordination challenges ultimately leading to strengthened partnerships and networks, improved budgetary allocations, and more efficient use of resources across sectors.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Fostering shared understanding to advance nutrition coordination in Nigeria

By Nemat Hajeebhoy

Chief of Nutrition, UNICEF, Nigeria



”

We must understand that Nutrition is multisectoral and requires strong coordination mechanisms... there is need to strengthen these coordination mechanisms and to achieve this, data systems need to be scaled up to ensure coordination is evidence-informed.”

- Nemat Hajeebhoy



Nigeria currently ranks 2nd globally and 1st regionally in the number of malnourished under 5 children. There are about 35 to 40 million children under five in Nigeria and at any given point in time, 13 million of these children are said to be stunted, 3 million suffering from wasting, and about 25 to 27 million children are anaemic. These statistics are extremely disturbing but can be changed by coordinated and harmonised action.

There is a sense of urgency and a need for concerted efforts by stakeholders to change the narrative and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. To do this, there needs to be an understanding that Nutrition is multisectoral and requires strong coordination. The National Council for Nutrition chaired by His Excellency, the Vice President, is an advantage as it already provides an excellent coordination structure. We however, do have another advantage in that the country already has an excellent coordination structure with the National Committee for Food and Nutrition domiciled within the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning as the principal coordinating body of all food and nutrition programmes in the country and the Subnational Committees for Food and Nutrition responsible for coordination of nutrition programmes at the subnational level. However, there is a need to strengthen these coordination mechanisms and to achieve this, data systems need to be scaled up.

Finally, the government and partners need to harmonise efforts and resources to achieve more high-quality and impactful nutrition interventions.

”

We need more investments, but we also need to ensure that we get better nutrition for every investment made”

- Nemat Hajeebhoy

GUEST ADDRESS

Prioritising investments in nutrition for improved health outcomes in Nigeria.

Dr Fatima Zuntu

Technical Advisor on Nutrition, Office of the Vice President, Nigeria



In the global arena of public health, nutrition forms the bedrock of human development, influencing our ability to thrive, to work and contribute meaningfully to society. Yet in our national discourse, it often remains underfunded and overlooked."

- Dr Fatima Zuntu

Good nutrition is fundamental to an individual's well-being. The benefits of investing in nutrition ripple through generations. Healthy mothers give birth to healthier children and well-nourished children grow into productive adults. Investing in nutrition should not be perceived as just a health intervention, but a generational investment that empowers the future. Good nutrition supports the cognitive development in children and serves as a foundation for life. A one-off intervention, though helpful in the short term, is not enough to reverse the trends of malnutrition. There is need for comprehensive, long-term investments that focus on maternal and child health, food fortification and community-based nutrition particularly for pregnant women and children under age 5. Targeted interventions like food fortification with essential micronutrients have proven to significantly reduce malnutrition and improve overall health outcomes. However, for these programs to succeed, there is need for sustained funding and political will at all levels of government.

PRESENTATION

Nutrition coordination gaps in Nigeria

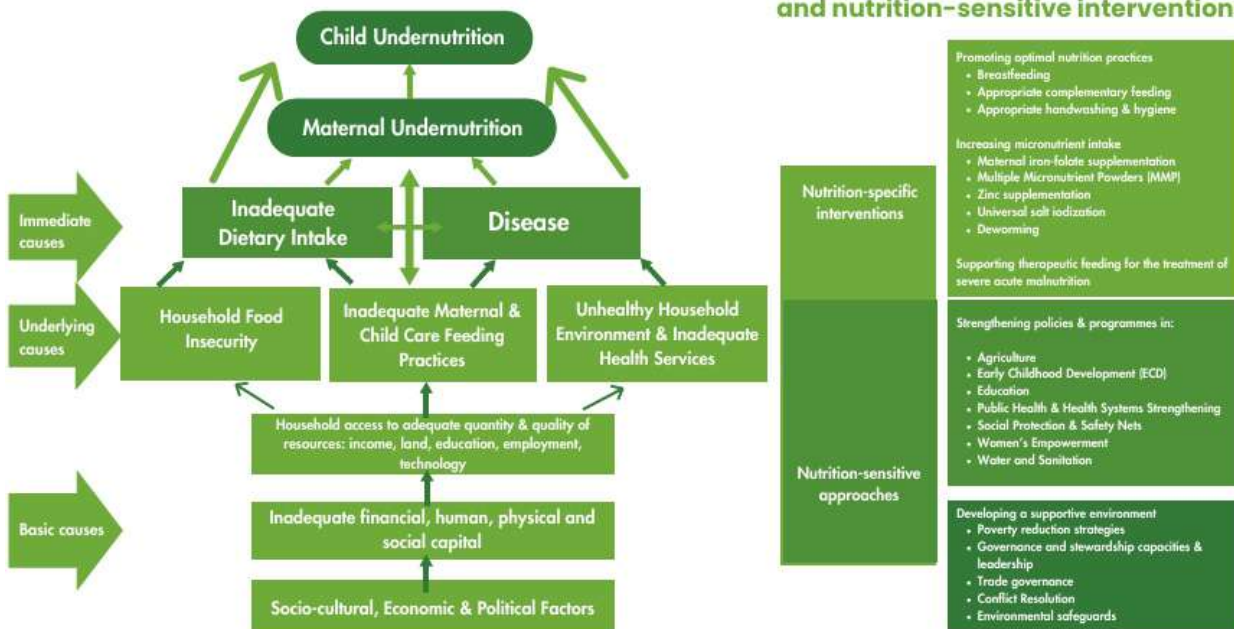
Adanna Opara

Programme Manager, Nigeria Health Watch

Malnutrition is a multifaceted issue of public health concern, that requires a coordinated multi-sectoral approach to be effectively addressed. The UNICEF conceptual framework of malnutrition outlines the basic, underlying and immediate causes of malnutrition, as well as the nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions needed to address them.



UNICEF Conceptual Framework & nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions



Source: Adapted from UNICEF, 2013; World Bank, 2013

In Nigeria, the prevalence of nutrition issues, including undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiency currently show figures that are far higher than the targets that have been set by global and national bodies.

Prevalence of Nutrition Issues in Nigeria



Undernutrition

Stunting
Wasting
Underweight

Stunting: 37% (2018 NDHS)

- Low height-for-age
- Result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition
- Associated with poverty, poor maternal health & nutrition, frequent illness and/or inappropriate feeding and care practices in early life

Wasting: 7% (2018 NDHS)

- Low weight-for-height
- Result of recent/acute and severe weight loss
- Associated with low intake of food of adequate quantity and quality and/or frequent or prolonged illnesses

Underweight: 23% (2018 NDHS)

- Low weight-for-age
- Composite measure (stunting, wasting or both)

Prevalence of Nutrition Issues in Nigeria



Overnutrition

Overweight
Obesity
Diet-related
Non-Communicable Diseases

Overnutrition: (Overweight: 20.3%, Obesity: 11.6%)

Diabetes:

- 3.7% (2021 International Diabetes Federation)
- 3,623,500 (total cases in adults)

Hypertension / Heart Diseases:

- 31.2% (Men: 29.5%; Women: 31.3%)
- 29% of all deaths in Nigeria are due to NCDs (2018 Systemic review & meta-analysis of NCDs & its risk factors)
- 11% of deaths in children are as a result of cardiovascular diseases (2018 WHO NCD profile)

Cancer:

- 115,950 (Total cancer cases in Nigeria)
- **Source:** Global Cancer Observatory 2018 (Globocan)

Prevalence of Nutrition Issues in Nigeria



Micronutrient Deficiency

Vitamins (A, Folic Acid etc)
Minerals (Iron, Zinc, Iodine etc)

Anaemia

- 68% (children 6 - 59 months) - (2018 NDHS)
- 58% (women aged 15 - 49 years) - (2018 NDHS)

Other Nutrition Issues

- 29% Exclusive Breastfeeding rate (2018 NDHS)
- 11% of children 6 -23 months are fed following the criteria for a minimum acceptable diet (2018 NDHS)

2025 NATIONAL NUTRITION TARGETS

- 1 Achieve a 50% reduction in the proportion of people who suffer hunger and malnutrition
- 2 Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months to 65% (Current: 29%)
- 3 Reduce the rate of stunting among under-five children to 18% (Current: 37%)
- 4 Reduce childhood wasting, including Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) to 10% (Current: 7%)
- 5 Reduce anaemia among pregnant women to 40% (Current: 58%)
- 6 Reduce the prevalence of diet-related non-communicable diseases by 25%

Source: National Multisectoral Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition (NMPFAN 2021 - 2025)

The country's nutrition coordination structure involves key entities such as the National Council on Nutrition, the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning and the National Committee on Food and Nutrition at the National level. At the subnational level, the coordination structure involves the Ministries of Economic Planning, the State and Local Government Committees on Food and Nutrition.

Through content analysis of various policies including the National Policy on Food and Nutrition, the National Multisectoral Plan of Action for food and nutrition, policies on infant and young child feeding, and the Agricultural Sector Food and Security and Nutrition Strategy, and review of various literature, the following gaps have been identified within these coordination structures ;

- 1** Lack of Clarity on Responsibility for Multisectoral Coordination
- 2** Inadequate interministerial or multisectoral collaboration
- 3** Inadequate Policy and Strategy Implementation
- 4** Insufficient Funding and Resource Allocation
- 5** Fragmentation of interventions and resources across MDAs
- 6** Lack of technical capacity at sub-national levels
- 7** Limited Community involvement in program design & implementation
- 8** Weak Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems



Nutrition Coordination Gaps

- 
Lack of Clarity on Responsibility for Multisectoral Coordination
 - There is often no clear leadership for nutrition across various ministries and sectors especially at the sub-national level
 - Confusion about responsibilities (who does what?) weakens collaborations between MDAs
 - The lack of a designated central body or leadership responsible for multisectoral coordination creates gaps in accountability and ownership of nutrition outcomes.
- 
Inadequate interministerial or multisectoral collaboration
 - Coordinating bodies lacking the capacity or resources to ensure effective collaboration between ministries and across sectors
 - Infrequent meetings, lack of follow-up meetings, slow decision-making process and implementation of interventions
- 
Inadequate Policy and Strategy Implementation
 - Lack of or weak integration of national nutrition policies and strategies into multisector plans of action at the sub-national level
 - Inadequate plan of action implementation at sub-national levels (skilled technical capacity, funding etc)
- 
Insufficient Funding and Resource Allocation
 - No budget line for nutrition activities in nutrition-sensitive sector plans
 - Insufficient budgetary allocation and release for nutrition-specific and sensitive activities



Nutrition Coordination Gaps



Fragmentation of interventions and resources

- MDAs, development partners and donors managing their budgets independently
- Development partners implementing interventions in silos, sometimes in similar locations, while neglecting others
- Duplication of efforts, a waste of resources and gaps in coverage of interventions in neglected locations



Lack of technical capacity at sub-national levels

- Technical capacity to coordinate nutrition activities at sub-national levels is often inadequate
- Nutrition experts are sometimes not placed in key positions of authority or do not have decision-making capacity.



Limited Community involvement in program design & implementation

- Many nutrition interventions are designed and implemented with minimal input from local communities
- This top-down approach limits the cultural relevance and effectiveness of programs, particularly in rural areas where traditional practices and beliefs play a significant role in nutrition behaviours.



Weak Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems

- Inadequate Data Collection and Information Sharing across multisector stakeholders
- Lack of or limited accountability mechanisms to ensure that all sectors contribute to nutrition outcomes

To address these gaps and the issue of malnutrition in Nigeria, there is an urgent need for an improved and more effective coordination. As highlighted, Nigeria has existing nutrition programmes and interventions, however, there is a need for more effective multisectoral collaboration to achieve improved nutrition outcomes.

FIRST PANEL SESSION

Multisectoral coordination challenges and opportunities for improvement in Nutrition and food security outcomes.



This panel session focused on the practical strategies for deploying complementary approaches to enhance nutrition coordination in Nigeria. The session gathered insights from implementing partners, donors, and civil society organisations working in the nutrition space across both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes to create a synergistic framework for improving nutrition outcomes.

Dr Vitalis Emeka Obi MNI

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and Chairman, National Committee on Food and Nutrition (NCFN)

The Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning which is responsible for coordinating food and nutrition interventions in Nigeria has included the establishment of multisectoral platforms like the National and Sub-national Committees on Food and Nutrition as part of the efforts to improve coordination of food and nutrition activities in Nigeria. However, a major challenge is that many development partners do not register with the coordinating ministry due to a lack of integration and alignment among nutrition programmes and policies across the country. Additionally, the Ministry has discovered that there are no departments or dedicated budget lines for nutrition programs in major Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and where they exist, they are often underfunded due to insufficient political will. Weak data systems and weak monitoring and evaluation systems further make it a challenge to track progress. This fragmented approach impedes effective implementation.

There is a need to leverage existing opportunities to push for the coordination and integration of Nutrition programs. Such opportunities include the governors' and commissioners' fora while also deepening partnerships with implementing partners for technical support and funding.



Strengthening our multi-sectoral collaboration, aligning policies, improving data systems and leveraging the political commitment will help address issues of food and nutrition in Nigeria."

- Dr Vitalis Emeka Obi

Jalo Ibrahim Ali MNI

Permanent Secretary Ministry of Budget, Chairman of the State Committee on Food and Nutrition (SCFN), Gombe State.

Gombe State is currently facing a significant challenge with malnutrition. However, through the Accelerating Nutrition Results in Nigeria (ANRiN) project, the state has implemented several activities aimed at improving the indices. One key aspect of the ANRiN project is the quarterly coordination meetings involving all relevant stakeholders. These meetings help the state to coordinate and keep track of all partner-implemented activities aimed at improving nutrition outcomes in the state. Nonetheless, the sustainability of the coordination efforts and interventions remains a critical challenge, particularly within our context where critical stakeholders are often transferred to other ministries. To address this and ensure that efforts and progress made are sustained, there is a need for effective knowledge management systems to be put in place at both the subnational and national levels.



Mrs Ladi Bako Aiyegbusi MNI

Director and Head of Nutrition Department, Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Nigeria

The main coordination structure for Nutrition within the health sector, is the National Nutrition Technical Working Group (TWG), where stakeholders and partners meet quarterly to discuss government priorities and interventions towards improving the nutrition indices for the country.

The partners, through the TWG, have supported the capacity building of providers and volunteers in the provision of maternal, infant, and young child feeding practices. So far, over 2000 master trainers have been trained in 36 states and FCT.

Coordination has also led to improvements in the infrastructure for the provision of nutrition services at the health facilities. A standard has been set for providing quality nutrition services which is used to monitor and identify gaps at the facilities. The government, through the coordination mechanism, is giving more priority to nutrition issues at both the national and subnational levels and this has translated to increased funding allocations.



There are, however, some gaps in policy implementation across the states. When policies are developed, it is expected that states either adapt or adopt them. However, this presents a challenge because different states recognise different priorities even though current statistics show that food and nutritional crises are everywhere. The quality and quantity of human resources and infrastructure also differ across the states, presenting another critical challenge. To address this, efforts are now being made to build the skills of community volunteers to enable them to engage more women and men within the communities.

Mallam Nuhu Kilishi

Director, Nutrition and Food Safety, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security

The Agricultural Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (2016-2025) was developed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) with support from the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and other stakeholders to address issues related to nutrition and food security. The strategy document takes a holistic approach with a focus on eight priority areas to ensure enhanced production, processing, and consumption of nutrient-dense food particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and children. The strategy has been successfully implemented in Gombe State through the Accelerating Nutrition Results in Nigeria (ANRiN) Project.

Additionally, the Federal Government of Nigeria is embarking on a nationwide project that aims to encourage families to grow their own gardens. While recognising the security challenges in the country, the content of the strategy is to ensure that there is diversification of local production and consumption of nutrient-dense foods.



SECOND PANEL SESSION

Exploring Strategies For deploying complementary approaches for Nutrition coordination in Nigeria.



This panel session focused on the practical strategies for deploying complementary approaches to enhance nutrition coordination in Nigeria. The session gathered insights from implementing partners, donors, and civil society organisations working in the nutrition space across both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes to create a synergistic framework for improving nutrition outcomes.



Mrs Chito Nelson

Independent Consultant on Nutrition, Nigeria.

Donor-funded priorities align well with Nigeria's national food and nutrition policy, but fragmentation remains a significant challenge. To address this, stronger leadership and coordination are needed at both the federal and state levels. There is need for multisectoral efforts in implementing nutrition interventions, particularly at the community level, where the burden of malnutrition is most deeply felt. The local government autonomy is expected to improve the effectiveness of nutrition programs, in a similar way it positively impacted primary healthcare in the past. The absence of a comprehensive mapping of donor activities, and the failure of some donors to register with the ministry result in inefficiency. Donors often cluster in certain areas, leaving other regions underserved.



A proposal for creating a basket fund for nutrition could streamline donor contributions, allowing the government and donors to jointly allocate resources. "

- Mrs Chito Nelson

Coordination efforts also require adequate funding, as without resources, activities cannot be effectively managed. Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) should understand their mandates and redirect donor activities that do not align with their focus areas.



Lilian Okafor

Communications Officer, Civil Society-Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN), Nigeria.

With a focus on improving nutrition funding, and developing, and implementing policies, CS-SUNN also advocates for issues such as six -months of paid maternity leave for exclusive breastfeeding. These advocacy efforts have seen positive outcomes, including increased nutrition funding, the domestication of the National Multisectoral Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition at the state level, and the recent approval of six -months of paid maternity leave in Cross River State

Ensuring every Nigerian's food and nutrition security requires a multisectoral approach. The Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning's digital system should help ministries work together, include more partners, use data to guide decisions, train officials, provide enough funding, and hold everyone accountable for reducing malnutrition. We understand that civil society organizations should hold the government to account in terms of policy implementation, funding and all of that, and supporting the government does not negate that responsibility.

At CS-SUNN, our primary mandate is to ensure that every Nigerian has access to adequate food and is nutrition secure. As an alliance of over 400 civil society, faith-based, and community organizations across 28 states and the FCT, working to improve nutrition outcomes in Nigeria, CS-SUNN collaborates.



We don't position ourselves as adversaries to government, we see ourselves as partners with the government in a shared vision, working towards eradicating malnutrition in Nigeria. So, when we see gaps, when we see bottlenecks, when policies are not implemented, when there is no funding for nutrition, we don't go carrying placards, we don't criticize, we do evidence-based advocacy".



Aisha Hadejia

Partner, Sahel Consulting, Nigeria.

Sahel Consulting plays an advisory role for government, donors, partners and private sector organisations on where to direct their investments in order to make a sufficient impact towards improving nutrition outcomes.

From our work, it is clear that the food and nutrition sector has a great coordinating mechanism. However, there is an urgent need for greater collaboration across all sectors beyond just the Agricultural and Health sectors to address nutrition comprehensively. To achieve this, there needs to be a unified stakeholder mapping for Food and Nutrition programmes in Nigeria.



Dr Osita Okonkwo

Country Director, Nutrition International, Nigeria

It is common knowledge that nutrition coordination is a bottleneck in Nigeria, that MDAs linked to nutrition across the country seem not to have identified nutrition as a key intervention in the country, and for that reason, nutrition has not been prioritised in their directorates.

In 2021, Nutrition International commissioned a study to identify the bottlenecks in the coordination of nutrition programmes in Nigeria and came out with far-reaching recommendations.

One of the recommendations was the creation of a directorate and budget line for nutrition across all MDAs, considering the budget line was a major issue for nutrition implementation in the country.

Quote

“The multisectoral nutrition action plan that was developed has never been reviewed, never monitored and never tracked. If that document was implemented appropriately, as expected, it could give the government a snapshot view of issues around nutrition in the country”.

Given that the issues around nutrition are multi-dimensional, Nutrition International works with the government and with communities to conduct behavioural change interventions which address some of these needs within the communities, using local resources available to them.



Recommendations



Nigeria's nutrition landscape demands a multisectoral framework that integrates all sectors including Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH), Environment and Agriculture.



It is imperative for nutrition stakeholders to fully recognise the critical importance of nutrition and nutrition programming.



There is the need to strengthen data systems and implement data-informed policies to ensure effective coordination of nutrition programs grounded in solid evidence.



There is also the need for the creation of nutrition departments across all Ministries, Departments and Agencies.



While one-off interventions may provide short-term relief, we must prioritise comprehensive long-term investments that focus on maternal and child health and foster collaborations to scale up these investments.



Effective collaboration and the success of nutrition programmes hinges on committed funding and unwavering political will at all levels of government.



Community engagement is crucial in the design and implementation of nutrition programmes to ensure that nutrition programmes are relevant to the needs of the communities.



Enacting proper legislation for food and nutrition in Nigeria is essential to encourage investment and help achieve national health and nutrition targets.

Appendix

Speaker Profiles



Safiya Shuaibu Isa,

*Deputy Director, Advocacy and Partnerships,
Nigeria Health Watch*

Safiya Shuaibu Isa is an advocacy and communications expert with over 19 years of experience delivering quality work in Nigeria's media and development sector. In the span of her career, she has developed and implemented advocacy and communication strategies for community engagement and media campaigns that inform demand creation and influence policy designs for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health + Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) as well as Social Protection. She is a skilled learning and dissemination event manager with a broad network in the media and development space. She has a Master's Degree in Development Studies and a first degree in English.

Dr. Vitalis Emeka Obi currently serves as the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and the Chairman of the National Committee on Food and Nutrition (NCFN). He has received numerous awards for academic, leadership, and professional excellence, including the Head of the Civil Service PMS Implementation Champion Award (2021) and the Commendation Award for Service Dedication (2019). He led the implementation of the Performance Management System (PMS), improved service welfare, and digitalized content services at the State House. Skilled in ICT, policy, strategy, and governance, he also excels in human resource management and community mobilization. A strong team leader, he completes projects on time and encourages excellence among his team. He actively participates in public discourse and contributes to societal development.



Dr. Vitalis Emeka Obi,

*Mni, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Budget
and Economic Planning*

Speaker Profiles



Dr. Osita Okonkwo is a public health expert with extensive experience in policy development, strategic planning, and program evaluation across sub-Saharan Africa and the U.S. He currently leads Nutrition International in Nigeria, advancing initiatives to improve national nutrition outcomes. Dr. Osita is a medical graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University and holds postgraduate degrees from Tulane University and Manchester Metropolitan University. He is also a Hubert Humphrey Fellow and a Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health, UK.

Dr. Osita Okonkwo,

Country Director, Nutrition International, Nigeria

Nduka Chito Nelson is a seasoned Public Health Nutritionist with over 35 years of experience in Nigeria. She has held leadership roles, including Head of Food & Nutrition Division at the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, and Head of Human Resources at NPHCDA. Her expertise spans public health, policy formulation, and nutrition program implementation. Nelson is dedicated to improving maternal, newborn, and child health and nutrition outcomes.



Mrs. Chito Nelson,

Independent Consultant on Nutrition, Nigeria.

Speaker Profiles



Nemat Hajeerbhoy,

Chief of Nutrition, UNICEF, Nigeria

Nemat Hajeerbhoy is a senior manager and technical expert with over 25 years of experience in shaping strategy, investments and implementing programs at scale. She is a dynamic and inspirational leader with demonstrated ability in partnership-building, advocacy, resource mobilisation, strategic planning, program design and management. Neemat has recorded numerous successes in delivering nutrition and health impact, enhancing the financial sustainability of programs and expanding portfolios while maintaining quality. Her expertise cuts across maternal, infant & young child nutrition and with numerous publications in peer-reviewed journals. She also has cross-sectoral experience in programs in social protection, water sanitation and hygiene, post-disaster rehabilitation, business and food sectors.

Dr. Fatima Suleiman Zuntu is a public health expert with extensive experience in program management and policy development. With a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of South Wales UK and a Bachelor of Medicine from the University of Maiduguri, she has successfully led initiatives addressing health equity, environmental sustainability and policy reforms. Currently serving as a technical adviser on Nutrition to the Vice president. Dr. Zuntu also leads the Suleiman Zuntu Foundation, focusing on impactful healthcare delivery. She holds fellowships with the West African Institute of Public Health and has received numerous certifications in global health, gender, and governance from renowned institutions. Dr. Zuntu's work continues to drive transformative health solutions across Nigeria.



Dr Fatima Zuntu

Public health expert

Speaker Profiles



Aisha Hadejia,

Partner, Sahel Consulting, Nigeria

Aisha Hadejia leads strategic consulting at Sahel Consulting, focusing on enhancing public sector capacity to develop inclusive policies for food producers, job creation, and improving smallholder farmers' livelihoods. She also spearheads Sahel's gender work in food systems. Aisha joined Sahel in 2021, bringing expertise in public health and gender, with previous roles at Society for Family Health and Girl Effect Nigeria. She holds degrees from the University of Leeds, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and University of Aberdeen. In 2023, she was recognized as a Leading African

Ladidi Kuluwa Bako-Aiyegbusi, mni, is a Public Health Practitioner and the pioneer Director of the Nutrition Department at the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Nigeria. With over 30 years of public service, she has contributed across various sectors, including Public Health, Family Health, and Nutrition. Since August 2023, she has led efforts to enhance nutrition programming, including upgrading the Nutrition Division to a full department. Her achievements include leading communication campaigns for outbreaks like Ebola, Lassa Fever, and COVID-19, and rebranding the National Family Planning Logo.



Mrs Ladi Bako-Aiyegbusi Mni,

*Director and Head of Nutrition Department,
Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare,
Nigeria*

Speaker Profiles



Lilian Okafor,

Communications Officer, Civil Society-Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN), Nigeria.

Lilian Okafor is a Communications Officer at CS-SUNN with over 12 years of experience in non-profit and media sectors. She has developed communication strategies for nutrition advocacy and built networks with 200+ health journalists. She manages CS-SUNN's digital platforms and led the #nutritiontuesday campaign, boosting nutrition awareness. Currently pursuing an MA in Development Communications, she also has a background in Peace Studies and Mass Communication. Lilian's affiliations with key organizations and her role in nutrition campaigns, like Nigeria's World Breastfeeding Week, highlight her dedication to improving nutrition in Nigeria.

An experienced public servant with expertise in state finances, budgeting, and project oversight. He has been a permanent secretary in Gombe State since 2017, currently serving in the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, and chairs the State Committee on Food and Nutrition. He has coordinated development projects with the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, and the EU. His notable certifications include membership in the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (mni) and fellowships from the Chartered Institute of Local Government Administration (FCPA) and Certified



Jalo Ibrahim Ali Mni,

Permanent Secretary Ministry of Budget, Chairman of the State Committee on Food and Nutrition (SCFN), Gombe State.

Speaker Profiles



Nuhu A. Kilishi, Director,
*Nutrition and Food Safety, Ministry of Agriculture
and Food Security.*

Mr. N. A. Kilishi is currently the Director and Head of Nutrition and Food Safety Department of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. He is an expert in Food and Nutrition Security with over thirty years of working experience in the Agricultural Sector. In addition to his postgraduate degrees, he attended several courses, workshops, seminars and meetings both locally and internationally on Food and Nutrition Security, Pest Management, Food Safety and Quality Assurance, CODEX, Silo Grains and Food Stock Management, Strategic Planning



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