

# Scaling up Nutrition in The Gambia

By

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# Background

- The Gambia, located on the West Coast of Africa, ranks among the least developed and poorest countries.
- Gross National Income per capita is estimated at only US\$ 290 (World Development Indicators Database, World Bank)
- Human Development Index (HDI), in 2009: 168 out of 182 countries.

# Population

- Population: 1,360,681 (GBoS, 2006)
- Population projected to reach 1.7 million by the year 2015.
- The Gambia has the fourth highest population density of 128 persons per square kilometre.
- This imposes extreme pressure on productive land and the provision of social services.

# Child Nutritional Status

- MICS (2005/2006) indicated:
  - 22.4% stunting;
  - 6.4% wasting; and
  - 20.3% underweight in children under five
  - 19.9% LBW (less than 2.5 kg)
  - 2.3% of children under five of years are obese
- NaNA study (2001) showed
  - 64% of children under five of years are deficient in vitamin A and 76% anaemic

# Adult Nutritional Status

- NaNA study (2001):
  - 73% and 56% of pregnant women and lactating mothers respectively are anaemic; and
  - 34% and 16% of pregnant women and lactating mothers respectively are deficient in vitamin A
- Another NaNA study (1999) showed:
  - Total Goitre Rate, a manifestation of IDD, was 16%
- VAMU study (2008):
  - 9% of urban women are undernourished
  - 25% and 17% of the women living in the urban area of Banjul and Kanifing are overweight and obese respective

# Progress in SUN .. 1

- First Nutrition Policy (2000 – 2004) developed which helped greatly to
  - place nutrition high on the agenda of the govt. for national development;
  - contribute immensely towards reducing the burden of malnutrition; and
  - improve the health and nutritional status of the Gambian Population
- Policy reviewed and revised: National Nutrition Policy (2010-2020), accompanied by a comprehensive Action, Strategic and Business Plans

# Progress in SUN .. 2

- The National Nutrition Agency (NaNA), a fundamental instrument in the operation of the Policy, was established in 2000 (merger of Nutrition Unit & Nutrition Coordinator) as the permanent mechanism to co-ordinate the implementation of the Policy.
- In 2005, NaNA now located under the Office of the Vice President, acquired legal entity by an Act of the National Assembly, mandated and charged with the responsibility of coordinating all nutrition and nutrition related activities in the country.

# Progress in SUN .. 3

- From implementing just one programme as the Nutrition Unit in 1986, NaNA has now designed, piloted and implemented other sustainable and cost effective community based nutrition intervention programmes such as:
  - Salt Iodisation Programme;
  - Vitamin A Supplementation Programme;
  - Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative;
  - Integrated Anaemia Pilot Programme; and
  - Baby Friendly Community Initiative
- to protect, promote and improve the nutritional status of the people.

# Challenges .. 1

- Between 2000 and 2005 NaNA, was adequately funded and equipped by the PHPNP and the Government of The Gambia.
- However, since the end of the PHPNP in 2005, funding for the Agency has significantly decreased with the Agency relying primarily on Government and UNICEF funding.
- This has severely affected the scaling up of activities in terms of required human, material and financial resources.

# Challenges .. 2

- Maintaining the quality of work for the delivery of efficient and effective services geared towards the achievement of the Agency's institutional goals and mission objectives;
- Retaining and motivating the dedicated and committed staff for the effective utilisation of knowledge, skills and abilities within NaNA so that the gains registered so far will be built on and not eroded; and
- Attracting well-qualified and competent staff with the ability, ambition and integrity

# Opportunities .. 1

- UNICEF is financing infant and young child nutrition programs in the tune of US\$95,189
- Currently the WB is also financing a two-year nutrition project at the cost of US\$3.0million.
- The project aims to promote healthy behaviors for maternal nutrition and child growth; and improve access to selected therapeutic and preventive public health nutrition services to vulnerable populations including children under-five and pregnant and lactating women in poor rural areas.

# Opportunities .. 2

- These provide opportunities to scale up , to other communities, the BFCI Programme which played a key role in the decrease in the proportion of malnutrition recorded during the PHPNP.
- The BFCI Programme, which flourished under the comprehensive World Bank-supported PHPNP (implemented from 1998 to 2005), serves as a model of excellence to other developing nations.

# Opportunities .. 2

- Required competent staff are being recruited
- The BFCI is being scaled up to other communities.
- A National Nutrition Strategic Plan (2011-2015) detailing strategies and activities to be carried out to achieve the Policy objectives have been developed.
- A Business Plan for Better Nutrition (2011-2015) outlining strategies and costs for tackling malnutrition has also been developed

# Opportunities .. 3

- We hope that with the Strategic and Business Plans, The Government of The Gambia through NaNA will be able to mobilise enough resources to support and sustain proven nutrition intervention programmes for the reduction of malnutrition and mortality among the population.

**Thank you**

**Merci**

**Gracias**