



GHANA

Promoting child growth through the involvement of local government authorities at district and department level

Learning Route, 26 May- 01 June 2014, Senegal

The Learning Route, jointly organised by the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN) Secretariat, the Fight Against Malnutrition Unit (Cellule de Lutte contre la Malnutrition- CLM) and PROCASUR Corporation, was held in Senegal from May the 26th to June the 1st, 2014. The Route hosted national delegations from SUN multi-stakeholders platforms of 7 countries: Benin, Burundi, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Niger, Sierra Leone and Peru.

After the completion of the Learning Route, each national delegation developed an "Action Plan" based on the lessons learned from Senegal in the fight against malnutrition. The general objective of the Plans is to adapt the good practices and the innovative solutions learned during the Route to the specific country's needs, with the final aim of reinforcing the strategies and initiatives currently in place at national level to improve nutrition.

The following pages present the Action Plan of Ghana. The purpose is to provide a general framework of the country's context and to present the on-going strategies and activities to improve nutrition.

What is the Action Plan's main objective?

The main objective of the Plan is to improve the nutrition status of pregnant women and children, especially during the first critical 1,000 days. Several factors have a negative influence on the nutrition status of pregnant women and young children, including a lack of awareness regarding healthy nutritional practices among mothers. The idea is to mobilize and train grandmothers as well as other respected local actors to act as agents of change in order to sensitize pregnant women on healthy nutritional practices.

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What is the context in which the Action Plan is framed?

Government of Ghana, as a SUN country since 2011, set up a multi-stakeholder platform, the Cross-Sectoral Planning Group (CSPG) which is under the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). Over the past 10 years, Ghana's economy has been marked by strong growth accompanied to a significant drop in poverty. However, the level of malnutrition among children remains high, notably in the poorest zones such as the north of the country. On the national level, 23% of children under the age of 5 are stunted, 6% are wasted, and 13% are underweight. In addition, 57% are anemic (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). These figures show improvements compared to the situation in 2008 (Ghana Health Service and ICF Macro, 2009).

Regarding women, while trends in underweight have remained stable, trends in overweight and anaemia have worsened with current levels of 30% for overweight and 59% for anemia (Ghana Health Service and ICF Macro, 2009). Iodine deficiency is also a concern, because only 34.5% of households consume adequately iodized salt (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). Universal salt Iodisation Programme is being implemented various Ministries (Trade and Industry, Health, Education, and Local Government and Rural Development).

Actions of the Plan, linked to Specific Objectives and Expected Results

Objective: To improve the nutritional situation of pregnant women and children and to promote an optimal nutritional status during the first 1,000 days of life, by training grandmothers as agents of change.

Actions:

- Consensus-building among key stakeholders, especially grandmothers;
- Mobilize resources;
- Prepare tailored training and communication materials to promote nutritional healthy practices, possibly in local languages;
- Raise awareness among a set of key stakeholders to support the process of sensitization among women, including Ministries (Health, Agriculture, Children's Affairs, Gender and Social Protection), local agencies, community-based or religious organizations;
- Identify key local actors and provide capacity building to grandmother;
- Mobilize grandmothers in order to promote nutritional healthy practices among pregnant women and young mothers.

Expected Results:

- Improved awareness and communicational skills of grandmothers on childcare and nutritional healthy practices in order to advise expectants and young mothers on proper nutrition behaviors during pregnancy and breastfeeding;
- Improved awareness of expectants and mothers on proper nutritional practices to improve child nutritional status during pregnancy and the first 1,000 days.

The current inclusion of nutrition in governmental policies and programs (such as the Medium-Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (METASIP), and in the School Health Education Policy) provides a strong institutional background to Plan. However, the lack of specialization in nutrition-related topics among teachers and rural agents, and a lack of educational supporting materials, still constitute a challenge to sensitize local people on nutritional and healthy practices.