

CSOs urge government to prioritize nutrition funding



From left to right: Dr. Asaba Gerald, Alex Bambona from MoFPED, Hon. Amongin Jacqueline, and Agnes Kirabo, Executive Director of FRA, during a panel discussion at the Nutrition Dialogue on April 17, 2025. (Photo: CSBAG)

The government of Uganda should prioritize financing the agro-industrialization program through domestic financing and particularly ensure that the government of Uganda contributes at least 75% of the program's budget.

Stakeholders, including representatives from development partners, government ministries and departments, civil society organizations, and the media, recently convened at a nutrition dialogue in Kampala to discuss ways to achieve government commitments to ending malnutrition in Uganda.

The dialogue, themed "A Pathway to Achieving Government Commitments to Ending Malnutrition," provided a platform for experts to share insights and strategies to tackle the country's persistent malnutrition challenges.

In a presentation by Christina Namubiru, Program Associate at Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), on behalf of CSBAG Executive Director Julius Mukunda, highlighted the alarming state of malnutrition in Uganda. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023 report, the number of malnourished people in Uganda has increased from 4.7 million in 2006 to 14.5 million people in 2022.

Furthermore, the number of severely food-insecure people rose from 8.1 million to 11.4 million during the same period, with 300,000 children under 5 years affected by wasting.

"The government of Uganda should prioritize financing the agro-industrialization program through domestic financing, contributing at least 75% of the program's budget," Namubiru emphasized.

The Uganda Demographic Health Survey 2022 showed some progress, with child stunting reducing to 26% from 29% in 2016. However, child wasting declined to 3.4% in 2022 from 5% in 2016. Despite this progress, the numbers remain concerning, particularly in regions like Karamoja, where 6 in every 10 households (63%) are severely food insecure.

The presentation emphasized the importance of investing in nutrition-related challenges to achieve the 2030 Agenda, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture." "Progressively increasing financing for nutrition commodities is crucial to reduce the funding gap and over-reliance on external funding sources," Namubiru added.

With the implementation of the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP) III on the horizon, the government is urged to ensure that government spending is well aligned with funding requirements and the National Development Plan (NDP) to guarantee full implementation of nutrition-related activities.

To address the malnutrition crisis, the government should prioritize adequate funding for local governments to allow the execution and provision of services to all Ugandans, ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation of activities funded under the Discretionary Development Equalization Grant (DDEG).

Edward Walugembe, Commissioner for Strategic Coordination and Implementation from the Office of the Prime Minister, emphasized the need for efficient and equitable implementation of nutrition objectives during his closing remarks.

"We need to build a better investment institution for nutrition, one that prioritizes the most vulnerable populations and promotes best practices," Walugembe said. "Let's work together to minimize the consequences of malnutrition and ensure that every Ugandan has access to nutritious food and healthcare."

With Uganda facing significant nutrition challenges, the dialogue aimed to identify solutions and strengthen partnerships to improve nutrition outcomes for all Ugandans.

With speakers emphasizing the need for equitable distribution and access to food, Agnes Kirabo, Executive Director of FRA, noted that despite sufficient food production in the country, many Ugandans struggle with hunger and malnutrition due to systemic issues, including weak food governance systems and inequities within the food system.

The dialogue cited alarming statistics, including the fact that 14.5 million people in Uganda are malnourished, and 11.4 million are severely food-insecure. According to Kirabo, these numbers are not just statistics, but a call to action to address the root causes of malnutrition and ensure that every Ugandan has access to nutritious food.

Kirabo further emphasized the need for improved coordination and accountability in addressing malnutrition, particularly in regions like Karamoja. She highlighted the importance of proper planning, leadership, and resource allocation to effectively tackle malnutrition and ensure that interventions reach those in need.

The discussion underscored the need for a more strategic and collaborative approach to address Uganda's nutrition challenges and hold stakeholders accountable for their actions.