

Action brief

# Advocacy to establish nutrition departments and budget lines in Nigeria

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**Country:** Nigeria

**Date:** 2023

**Themes:** Social Mobilization, Advocacy, and Communication

**Sub-themes:** Building national investment cases, supported by data and evidence, to drive nutrition advocacy



## Overview



In Nigeria, malnutrition remains a significant public health challenge. The country has the highest number of stunted children under the age of 5 in sub-Saharan Africa and the second highest in the world, with a prevalence of 42 per cent in 2003, 41 per cent in 2008, and 37 per cent in 2013 and 2018, according to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. One critical driver of malnutrition in Nigeria is insufficient funding for nutrition, with an attendant low commitment by policymakers to mainstreaming nutrition in the Basic Health Care Provision Fund, the country's basic health-care programme, at the state level. Insufficient funding for nutrition should be addressed to achieve the Human Capital Development in Nigeria vision of "healthy, educated and productive Nigerians for a globally competitive nation by 2030."



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The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Civil Society Network (CSN) in Nigeria has, since 2018, led and supported advocacy engagements among key state actors and nutrition institutions. Advocacy has centered on creating specific nutrition budget lines and adequately funding nutrition, including the funding of state-specific nutrition action plans and policies at the national level and in the Lagos, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Niger and Kano states.



## Objectives of the action brief

This brief aims to shed light on ways to:

→ Establish nutrition departments and create nutrition budget lines in all line ministries, departments and agencies

→ Ensure improved budgetary allocation for nutrition at national and subnational levels

→ Ensure the timely release and utilization of funds allocated for nutrition at national and subnational levels



## Period covered

This action brief covers the period 2018 to 2023.



## What action was taken?

Specific and strategic advocacy visits to the permanent secretaries and directors of relevant ministries in SUN CSN project states have resulted in significant commitments to budgetary allocations and funding for nutrition. Through evidence-based advocacy, the SUN CSN facilitated the delivery of nutrition interventions and held the Government accountable for its commitments to allocate, release and transparently use funds for the implementation of high-impact nutrition interventions at the national level and in Kaduna, Kano, Nasarawa, Niger and Lagos states. Legislative retreats were organized for lawmakers, policymakers and decision makers throughout the country to secure their buy-in. A budget tracking strategy that implements a scorecard to keep tabs on budget allocations and funding and encourages healthy competition among states has helped sustain this success.

In Lagos, there were no budgetary allocations for nutrition in line ministries, departments and agencies, and policymakers and decision makers had limited understanding and political commitment among to improve nutrition, with some lacking clarity on roles, responsibilities and expectations. The SUN CSN in Nigeria – in collaboration with other development partners, state chapters, the media and government agencies and with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation – led and supported advocacy efforts that resulted in the creation of budget lines in Lagos and improved funding in other focal

states. An annual pre-budget meeting brought together all project states to review nutrition budget allocations and performance, and Lagos was the only state without a budget line for nutrition in line ministries, departments and agencies. This offered an opportunity for advocacy to the commissioners, permanent secretaries and directors present. This evidence was then presented at the annual legislative retreat, and the final stage of advocacy was visits to individual line ministries, departments and agencies and to the office of the wife of the Governor of Lagos.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the SUN CSN supported the Government of Nigeria in the development of a nutrition response plan for COVID-19. The CSN also conducted several social media campaigns on prioritizing nutrition in Nigeria's COVID-19 response and recovery plan. The CSN received 200,000 impressions on Twitter and reached targets among mothers, youth, and decision makers in the health and agricultural sector and elsewhere. Breastfeeding mothers received guidance on the best respiratory and hygiene practices for breastfeeding during the pandemic, and Nigerians were taught how to boost their immunity via adequate nutrition. During a SUN CSN webinar on nutrition and COVID-19 in 2020, the regional representative of Action Against Hunger for West Central Africa cited the CSN's community and media engagements to promote nutrition as part of needed action to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on nutrition across the region.



Prior to these interventions, line ministries, departments and agencies charged with the coordination and implementation of nutrition activities did not have the funds for such activities. In addition, the Government of Nigeria was yet to finalize and approve the National Multisectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition.

Now, much of that has changed:

- The President of Nigeria has approved the establishment of a nutrition department in nutrition line ministries, departments and agencies.
- Key ministries, departments and agencies in states throughout Nigeria have created, allocated and now ensure the timely release of funds for nutrition.
- Some states have developed nutrition annual operational plans for 2023, drawn from the costed Multisectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition.
- The media have made notable commitments to prioritizing coverage of nutrition issues and spotlighting the need for increased funding for nutrition.

Generally, some of the good practices adopted by the SUN CSN were:

- Evidence-based advocacy for increased budgets and funding for nutrition, in partnership with relevant partners and stakeholders

- The promotion of transparency and accountability via quarterly budget tracking and administration of appraisal tools – including the country's new digital Performance Management System – to ascertain progress, challenges and the way forward
- Media advocacy and capacity-strengthening – through round-table engagements, social media campaigns, training and more – to prioritize the coverage of nutrition

The impacts of advocacy include:

- Partnership for Improving the Nigeria Nutrition System project states have delivered year-over-year increases in nutrition budget allocations and disbursements. For example, state budgets increased by anywhere from 32 per cent to more than 500 per cent of the original budget.
- Lagos, for the first time, created budget lines in ten line ministries, departments and agencies, including Health, Economic Planning and Budget, Women Affairs, Youth and Social Development, Environment and Agriculture. Budgetary allocations for nutrition interventions in Lagos increased from less than 18 million naira in 2016 to more than 268 million naira in fiscal year 2022.





## What would the country do differently?

The Government's bureaucratic processes constituted the greatest barrier and limiting factor for the effectiveness and the use of evidence-based advocacy. Relevant

stakeholders helped in reducing the bureaucratic processes, and even more could have been done to secure stakeholder support.



## Adaptation and applicability

- **There is a need to provide support to the Government rather than being antagonistic in engaging for the establishment of nutrition departments and the creation of budget lines for nutrition.**
- **It also is important to use evidence-based advocacy briefs for engagement, to build strategic partnerships among organizations, and to use the media for a stronger voice. Improving the understanding of policymakers, legislators and key actors on issues is crucial to their taking action in favor of the issue.**



## Next steps

- Next steps include continuous evidence-based advocacy for the establishment of nutrition departments, the creation of nutrition budget lines in all ministries, departments and agencies at the subnational level, and increased funding for nutrition in Nigeria. A source is needed for more funding for this purpose.
- Next steps also include continuous engagement with high-level coordinating bodies (the Office of the Vice-President and the Ministry for Finance Budget and National Planning) in evidence-based advocacy at both state and national levels.



## Further information

-  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1LG9n7xXEU>
-  [https://www.facebook.com/cssunnNigeria/photos/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/cssunnNigeria/photos/?ref=page_internal)
-  [https://twitter.com/CS\\_SUNN](https://twitter.com/CS_SUNN)
-  <https://cs-sunn.org/>

This Good Practice was developed in collaboration with the SUN Civil Society Network (SUN CSN). For more information about the SUN CSN, please visit their website: <https://www.suncivilsociety.com/>



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