1.0 Background

The Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) Project is a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that began in October 2011. SPRING’s overarching vision is to prevent stunting, and work with women and children on reducing anemia through: social and behavior change communication for nutrition; maternal, infant, and young child nutrition programming with a focus on the first 1,000 days of life; and implementation research that addresses the challenges of delivering effective nutrition programming at scale.

SPRING implements key nutrition intervention within a multisectoral framework. In consideration of their agreed-upon targets and goals with Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) and other international coordinating bodies and developed within the context of national policy and legal frameworks, the Ugandan government produced the 2011–2016 Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP), which has set its own targets and goals for nutrition.

The UNAP focuses on the 1,000 days period from conception to the child’s second birthday. As described in the UNAP, SPRING Project is one of the key implementing partners supporting the government to implement key nutrition specific and sensitive intervention nationally and at district level.

2.0 Engagement with the UNAP secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister

The parliament of the Republic of Uganda designated the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to coordinate multi-sectoral efforts to reduce maternal and child undernutrition through UNAP 2011-2016. To help coordinate the UNAP, UNAP Implementation Secretariat was formed in the Department of Policy Implementation and Coordination at OPM. SPRING on behalf of USAID/Uganda is supporting the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNAP 2011-2016 at national, district and community levels. This is achieved through implementation and documentation of key priority high impact nutrition interventions using Pathways for Better Nutrition case study, strengthening integration of nutrition into health service delivery for prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition, prevention of stunting and anaemia using the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) and community mobilization approach, strengthening district, sub county and community engagement for improved nutrition planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in Southwest and Namutumba district.
The following section describes the key technical assistance SPRING is providing to the government of Uganda for UNAP implementation, monitoring and evaluation:

2.1 Pathway for Better Nutrition (PBN) Case study

Over the last few decades, Uganda has made significant progress in planning for improved nutrition, as policymakers have recognized the importance of a strong multisectoral effort to combat malnutrition in the country. The SPRING Project in collaboration with OPM is working on a mixed method case study in Uganda. The main objective of the prospective study is to explore how the Government of Uganda (GOU) prioritizes nutrition interventions and supports the implementation of its national nutrition plan to reach its goal of reducing undernutrition in children and women of child bearing age. The main focus is on: a) relative emphasis given to the nutrition-specific and sensitive activities and b) how prioritization of these activities affects resources allocated.

Uganda was selected to conduct this study based on the following criteria:

1. The country has signed onto the SUN secretariat.
2. The country is rated as “ready to scale up” or “already scaling up” by SUN and rated as medium to strong on nutrition governance by World Health Organization (WHO).
3. The country has a definite commitment of funds from one or more donors for at least the next two years to support the goals that the country has set out on reduction of undernutrition.

2.1.1 Current Progress

- National baseline KII interviews and budget data collection has been completed covering all six SUN stakeholder groups (CSOs, UNAP Government Sectors, UN agencies, Bilateral and Multilateral Donors, Private sector and academia and research). Draft technical briefs have been written focusing on understanding coordination and scale up in the context of the UNAP. And National level qualitative and budget data collection is being done to validate the national level work.
- District baseline budget data collection (Kisoro and Lira) was completed. SPRING’s sub-contractor (German NGO DSW) is covering budget portion of district study and SPRING Uganda staff collected qualitative data to complement the budget analysis. In collaboration with the office of the Prime Minister, the case study team carried District based qualitative KII interviews in Kisoro and Lira, the report is also in the final stages. In collaboration with UNAP secretariat, the case study team carried District based qualitative KII interviews in Kisoro and Lira, the report is also in the final stages. PBN case study site available, repository for all study documents: The first round of national level interview have already been concluded has the report has already been finalized, the interviews mainly targeted key informant from UNAP key ministries (Sectors)

2.2 National Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy
Upon approved by USAID/Uganda, SPRING has provided technical support to the UNAP secretariat for the development of the Social Change and Mobilization Sub-strategy and the finalization of the national Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy. SPRING achieved this through its SBCC program officer seconded to the secretariat.

SPRING worked with UNICEF, FANTA and REACH as well as other national nutrition stakeholders (government ministries, UN agencies, development partners, SUN Uganda, USAID implementing partners, and civil society [non-governmental organizations, community-based and faith-based organizations]), to finalize and initiate implementation of the National Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy focused on Reducing Chronic Under-nutrition.

2.2.1 Current Progress

- Supported the planning and coordination of several partner meetings aimed at finalizing the National Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy. SPRING seconded SBCC program officer to OPM to play the coordination role for the communication task force consisting of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA), SPRING, Uganda Civil Society Coalition on Scaling Up Nutrition (UCCO-SUN), Realizing Expanded Access to Counseling and Testing for HIV in Uganda (REACH – U), WHO and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- Provided technical input and facilitated review and discussion of the final drafts of each of three sub strategies—Social Behavioral Change Communication (supported by UNICEF), Social Change & Mobilization (supported by SPRING) and the Advocacy (supported by FANTA).
- Assisted the UNAP secretariat in OPM to ensure that the three Sub-strategies are harmonized into one comprehensive National Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy in support of the UNAP with a costed implementation plan and M&E framework.
- Supported the OPM with ideas and potentially with events to generate financing and in-kind contributions for the major communication activities from the government, non-governmental organizations including the commercial private sector and traditional social institutions.
- SPRING through SBCC program officer is currently working closely with the UNAP secretariat in OPM Secretariat to organize the second edition of the National Nutrition Forum, which will also be used to launch and disseminate the National Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy.
- Commenced the coordination of the implementation of the National Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy. This includes: planning and implementation of particular activities across partners, monitoring implementation of the activities for adherence to the strategy, document general progress, and monitoring commitments made toward implementation.
2.3 Support to implement UNAP objective 2 strategy 2.3 enhance consumption of diverse diet and promote the consumption of nutrient enhanced foods

As part of the 5 year cooperative agreement, SPRING/Uganda supports key government sectors, the private sector, and industries to implement UNAP objective 2 strategy 2.3 which is aimed at enhancing consumption of diverse diet and promoting the consumption of nutrient enhanced foods. Through logistical and technical support from SPRING/Uganda, the government has made considerable progress in advancing the fortification agenda by developing a food quality system which includes passing legislation for mandatory fortification of frequently consumed foods such as wheat and maize flour, cooking oils and fats.

SPRING/UGANDA is building on the work that has been on going in food fortification with government and other partners engaged in food fortification such as the Ministry of health (MoH) which coordinates the national working group in food fortification, UNBS for quality control services, and systems to regulate the testing of fortified foods at factory, industrial and imports, and retail shops to ensure compliance with mandatory fortification regulations.

2.3.1 Current progress

- Provided technical and logistical support to MoH in the development of a work plan for the NWGFF.
- Provided technical and logistical to MoH to organize quarterly meetings of the NWGFF and technical sub committees to coordinate fortification activities. The NWGFF approved some activities in the work plan in the 4 meeting held so far. Industrial visits have also been made to identify challenges, and to ensure that industries are motivated to fortify.
- SPRING/Uganda has supported MoH to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for fortification, and indicators for monitoring fortification at various levels have been developed.
- The project has supported MoH working group secretariat to organize sensitization meeting of consumers. This has resulted into increased awareness of benefits of consumption of fortified foods to key government institutions, Ministry of Education Ministry, Prisons, hospitals, schools.
- SPRING/Uganda provided logistical and technical support to MoH in conducting institutionalization for fortification program. As a result, awareness has been created for sustainability of fortification program by advocating for integration of food fortification in government institutions.
- SPRING/Uganda has supported the private sector foundation in the mobilization of small and medium scale millers to fortify through which a public private partnership for production of fortified foods strengthened.
- The project has supported Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) to conduct industry inspections for general manufacturing practice (GMP), compliance with Mandatory fortification regulations and fortification standards. As a result, industries have been supported to ensure that the fortification policy and standards are adhere to.
- SPRING/Uganda has supported UNBS and MoH to training of inspectors and regulators to monitor in the markets the quality of fortified foods to ensure compliance to fortification standards.
2014, a total of 70 inspectors were trained. The capacity for monitoring at industry, border points and retail shops to ensure quality and safety of fortified foods has been enhanced.

- SPRING/Uganda has also supported UNBS and Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) to test fortified food products at the laboratory to ensure compliance to fortification standards. External industry audit are facilitated to ensure compliance to standards and also strengthen food quality control systems for fortified foods
- Through support to UNBS, local industries have been trained in fortification standards. This has resulted into built capacity of local industries to fortify. A total of 136 laboratory technicians, machine operators, production officers, quality controllers were trained in GMP practice, Quality Assurance and Quality control (GMP QA/QC) from 15 industries.

3.0 Support to districts through the UNAP Framework

To further decentralize the implementation of UNAP, SPRING/Uganda is working closely with OPM to ensure that the implementation of the UNAP reaches district, health facilities and sub county levels in the areas of project operations. This is mainly through existing district, health facility and sub county structures.

SPRING in collaboration with the UNAP Secretariat in the OPM, oriented the District Nutrition Coordination Committees (DNCCs) of Kisoro, Ntungamo, and Namutumba on the UNAP to enable them to plan, implement, monitor, and coordinate nutrition interventions in their districts. Following the orientation, each of DNCCs developed a three month action plan. SPRING/Uganda teams were responsible for monitoring the implementation of these plans and, where appropriate, provide technical and financial assistance. The DNCCs of Kisoro and Ntungamo were supported in the formation and orientation of Sub-County Nutrition Coordination committees (SNCCs). All the 17 sub-counties in Kisoro and 21 in Ntungamo have formed their own SNCCs, which are now recognized as structures existing to coordinate and support nutrition activities.

In Namutumba district, the DNCC members were supported to form and orient 6 sub county nutrition coordination committees (SNCCs). Despite the current scope in the district being limited to integration of nutrition services into HIV care. Some of the trained SNCC members have worked closely with the district team in rolling out UNAP activities at sub county level.

The project working through the Ministry of Health, District Health Offices and health facilities has supported in the integration of nutrition assessment, counseling and support (NACS) into health delivery in 51 health facilities in southwest and Namutumba district. This has been achieved through ongoing training, coaching and mentorship of health workers and community health workers on NACS.

3.1 Current progress

- SPRING has supported the formation and orientation of multi-sectorial District Nutrition Coordination Committees (DNCC) in Kisoro, Ntungamo and Namutumba districts. The DNCC provides technical advice/guidance to the district technical planning committees and district
councils on nutrition planning, budgeting, prioritization and implementation, provides technical support to the lower LGs (LLGs) to plan and prioritize nutrition in their plans and budget, ensures multi-sectoral coordination and monitoring of nutrition activities and partners at district and sub-country levels.

- The project has supported Kisoro and Ntungamo district to organize nutrition advocacy meetings. The meetings were aimed at sharing progress of UNAP implementation at district, health facility, sub county and community level in Kisoro and Ntungamo districts, identifying lessons learnt, existing gaps and suggestions for improvement by all stakeholders at all levels of the district, providing technical guidance to Kisoro and Ntungamo districts on how to have nutrition integrated into district, Sub County and health facility levels, and working with all key stakeholders to support identify key doable activities for nutrition service delivery at all levels of the districts.

- The project has also supported Kisoro, Ntungamo and Namutumba districts to organize quarterly district nutrition review meetings aimed at reviewing quarterly activities of the nutrition committees. These meetings are held in each of the 3 districts.

- SPRING has supported the scale up of nutrition activities to the parish and village levels through engagement of DNCC members as Trainers of Trainers and supervisors of the Community mobilization teams and Community action Groups which are composed of the SNCC members and VHTs as local council leaders respectively. This has taken place in Kisoro and Ntungamo districts.

- Some sub counties such as Bwongyera as result of advocacy and orientation meetings organized by SPRING have included a vote of nutrition to tune of UGX. 480,000 in their sub county budgets.

- The project has built the capacity of supported health facilities to include nutrition services in routine health services by training health workers in NACS, Option B+, revised HMIS tools, and through routine coaching, continuous medical education, learning sessions at district, regional and national levels have been organize. In 2014, a total of 1017 health workers were trained. At community level, a total of 1159 VHTs have been trained to support in the implementation of nutrition activities.