

Scaling up nutrition

ZAMBIA



LOCATION: Three districts of Zambia's Southern Province



PROJECT NAME: Realigning Agriculture and Water Sanitation & Hygiene for Nutrition (RAGWA-NUT), funded by the European Commission



GOAL: Improve the nutrition of women and children under 5 years of age within a target population of 452,094 people.



DURATION: 36 months (2016 – 2019)

OVERVIEW

The first 1,000 days of a child's life are extremely significant for survival, growth and development, making child health a high priority in World Vision's programming.

The number of children in Zambia who survive beyond the age of five has improved dramatically. Fifty years ago, one in five children (20%) did not reach their fifth birthday.¹ Now, through improvements in health care, it is one in every 16 children (6%).² Despite this encouraging national picture, many children in rural areas of Zambia are still malnourished. This project sought to improve maternal and young child nutrition through health and nutrition practices, food security, income, and access to water, hygiene and sanitation.

Timed and Targeted Counselling (ttC)

The project sought to improve knowledge, behavior and practice of nutrition and access to health services among pregnant and lactating women. We used Timed and Targeted Counselling (ttC)³ which was developed using World Vision's technical strategy, which includes evidence-based interventions for pregnant women and for children under 2, that reduce maternal and infant mortality.

The project worked with local leaders and government health centre staff to train Safe Motherhood Action Groups in Timed and Targeted Counselling (ttC) with support from the village leaders and trained Rural Health Centre staff. Safe Motherhood Action Group members then reached out and provided support to families.

Home visits were timed carefully to meet the specific needs of the mother and child within the first 1,000 days, from conception to 2 years. Groups use picture booklets and household handbooks to address barriers and myths in relation to health and nutrition.



15,071 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers supported.



55,680 children aged 6-59 months were monitored for healthy growth and development.

The Positive Deviance Hearth method⁴ was also used in this project, helping to identify malnourished children within the community and learn from mothers with healthy children in poor households. Positive health and hygiene practices were shared with mothers and caregivers in their homes, while over a 12-day period underweight children received a nutrition-dense diet, made from low-cost, highly nutritious foods to help them recover.



RESULTS

The project and government health care staff worked with communities to achieve the following results, which were especially encouraging considering there was a drought in the region during the project, making the availability of food an even bigger challenge than usual:



1,728 children have recovered from malnutrition.



20,479 young people have been reached with health and nutrition activities through schools.



342 savings groups have been set up supporting families to buy essentials and pay bills.



186 vulnerable families are now rearing goats.



69 nutrition groups are now sharing knowledge in growing and preserving nutritious food.

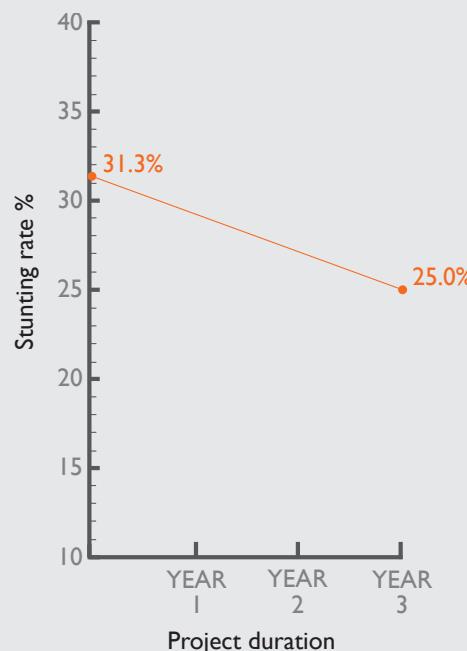


1,487 households have an improved water supply and community champions led the way to complete **4,381 latrines and handwashing stations**.

IMPACT ON NUTRITION



The final evaluation⁵ reported that the stunting rate (number of children who are short for their age) **decreased from 31.3% to 25% over three years**, which means that **20% fewer children are affected by chronic malnutrition**.



COVER: Lovenes is now a happy and healthy 2-year-old, after her mother Joyce received Positive Deviance Hearth Nutrition training through World Vision.

FAR LEFT: Melody (pictured in red top), a mother in the project receives support from Ruth, a Safe Motherhood Action Group member.

LEFT: Safe Motherhood Action Group members receive bicycles to help them to reach all households with health and nutrition advice and support.

ABOVE: Baby Clive and his mother, beneficiaries of the programme.

¹ UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation <https://childmortality.org/data/Zambia>

² <https://data.unicef.org/country/zmb/> (updated December 2018)

³ World Vision International <https://www.wvi.org/health/timed-and-targeted-counseling-ttc>

⁴ World Vision International <https://www.wvi.org/nutrition/project-models/positive-deviancehearth>

⁵ The final evaluation report received a score of 51, which means that it meets minimum standards for evidence quality according to the BOND evidence principles. https://www.bond.org.uk/monitoring-and-evaluation/monitoring-and-evaluation-tools/evidence_principles

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

All three districts were affected by a drought in the second half of the project, compounding difficulties for families in accessing food and water. The Positive Deviance Hearth approach, which relies on food contributions from participating local households, was affected and adaptations had to be made to the method. For nine months, cooking demonstrations and nutrition education continued with a range of foods provided by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Safe Motherhood Action Groups achieved success because they were willing to overcome challenges – including covering long distances to visit their registered households with pregnant women and children. Through gifts-in-kind from World Vision that's become easier, as the project secured 72 bicycles for these remarkable volunteers.

MILDRED'S STORY

Mildred and Conrad have three children. Their son Chiatego was found to be malnourished in April 2017. He was immediately referred to the Positive Deviance Hearth programme and at the end of 12 days he had gained an encouraging 200g. Volunteers continued visiting, and in October 2018 Chiatego was a normal, healthy weight.

The family was also selected to benefit from the “goat pass on” project. Chiatego benefits from the goat’s milk Mildred uses in his porridge. Goats also provide the family with income as they multiply, and the mother goats have already been passed on to the next family.

PICTURED: Mildred and baby Chiatego.

Mildred was visited regularly by one of the trained Safe Motherhood Action Group members when she was pregnant with her third child and had a safe delivery in the local health clinic. The Safe Motherhood Action Group continued visiting to provide post-natal support, and both Chiatego and the newborn baby Mainza are healthy. The family is also part of the savings group in their village. Conrad explains:

“Being part of the savings group has really helped us to be resilient and cushion the shocks experienced in our area because of the drought.”



World Vision UK

World Vision House, Opal Drive,
Fox Milne, Milton Keynes, MK15 0ZR
worldvision.org.uk

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