

Mapping community stakeholders improves nutrition collaboration across sectors



Stakeholder mapping: A community approach to nutrition

Collaboration is key for different sectors to work together. It is important to assess the nutrition related activities of various sectors. One way to do this is through a process called “stakeholder mapping”. Mapping activities can help coordinate different actors around a common goal.

A “stakeholder” is an individual, group, or institution with a common interest. In this case, stakeholders are those who do work that already contribute to improving nutrition. They include individuals who work in health, education, agriculture, and other sectors. Community stakeholder mapping can help District Nutrition Officers (DNUOs) understand the complex causes of malnutrition and act on national multi-sectoral nutrition policies.

DNUOs conduct community mapping to:



Build relationships with people in other sectors and enhance multi-sectoral planning.



Improve access to nutrition data and pool resources for a coordinated response to malnutrition.



Support community work and strengthen partnerships with civil society.



Identify local causes and locally acceptable solutions to address malnutrition.

In 2011, the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) worked on nutrition stakeholder mapping. TFNC mapped nutrition actions at the national level. They used a tool developed by Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition (REACH). The goal was to find gaps and implementation challenges.

Academic mentors from the Building Strong Nutrition Systems project supported District Nutrition Officers (DNUOs) in two districts. With mentor support, DNUOs adapted the REACH tool and pilot tested the new tool to map stakeholders across their district. The tool aims to gather information and build joint efforts with stakeholders.

In each district, DNUOs:

1. Gained an overview of the nutrition-relevant workforce. They learned who is doing what and where.
2. Developed a plan to engage stakeholders and increase linkages. The plan suggests how to strengthen activities by adding nutrition content.

DNUOs learned about potential partners

The adapted mapping tool helped DNUOs gather key information. They learned about current stakeholders and relevant nutrition activities. For each activity, they asked about the target audience and methods for reaching the audience.

DNUOs conducted face-to-face interviews with stakeholders. DNUOs learned about nutrition activities like breastfeeding counselling. They also wanted to know about activities beyond the health sector. To do this, DNUOs asked, “Which activities of your organization might affect the growth, health, or food choices of mothers and young children?”

Mapping questions covered three thematic areas:

1. Successes and challenges in planning and delivering community programs and activities.
2. How different sectors work together to improve health or nutrition. If this doesn’t happen, the value of focusing on joint action.
3. New ways and underutilized approaches to enhance education and services that contribute to reducing malnutrition.

Stakeholder mapping uncovered challenges and new opportunities

DNuOs identified a few challenges and potential solutions. Districts aim to register all organisations in their district. Such a list can help DNuOs identify stakeholders. The district's list contained many inactive organizations. Improving relationships and the registration process will help DNuOs better identify and work with stakeholders.

Interviewing stakeholders requires time and money. Conducting routine mapping would mean changes for human and financial resources. One solution is to establish a team of 2 to 3 individuals from different sectors. The team can pool resources and work together to map. This team might include the DNuO, nutrition focal points in other departments, ward level officers, or trained community health workers.

In addition, further adapting the mapping tool to include common nutrition goals and indicators important to other departments might create an opportunity for data collection that benefits everyone.



Potential plan to support stakeholders

DNuOs shared mapping results with council leaders. The results helped the DNuOs advocate for joint nutrition activities. Mapping helped DNuOs document and build upon a community-level nutrition workforce. Using the results, DNuOs led conversations on how to add nutrition to ongoing activities and improve partnerships across sectors. From the data, DNuOs developed a plan. This plan outlined potential ways to support and follow up with stakeholders who were most ready to work together.

One of the most important things that DNuOs said they learned is that there are a number of community programs that can include nutrition education. One example is household gardening plot programs. DNuOs wanted to support stakeholders to include education on how vegetables can be stored and prepared to make them more nutritious.

Another example is cash crop programs. DNuOs found an opportunity to support these programs to include lessons on how fathers can use income to buy foods that are vital for pregnant women and young children.

Stakeholders were interested in working together. They wanted to learn which community organizations have similar activities. In addition, they wanted to know how to get more nutrition resources and support. Nearly all stakeholders felt their activities were relevant to nutrition. Some were interested in working with the DNuO to make their activities better.

Summary of key points:

- ▶ National response to malnutrition is strong. Yet district councils need guidance to put nutrition policies and guidelines into practice.
- ▶ Academic mentors worked with DNuOs in two districts. With mentor support, DNuOs did community stakeholder mapping. The goal was to assess key stakeholders and activities in different sectors.
- ▶ DNuOs interviewed stakeholders on their activities. They also asked them about opportunities and challenges they face in reaching their goals and working across sectors.
- ▶ DNuOs made a plan to support stakeholders across sectors to improve nutrition. The plan aims to help stakeholders add nutrition goals and activities to programs, monitor efforts, and expand programs that are working.



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