USAID’s Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA)

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

October 2016 to September 2017

[Map showing various countries and regions]
According to the 2017 *Global Nutrition Report*, despite improvements in chronic and acute malnutrition in children under 5, the global community is off track in meeting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.2—to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. While improving nutrition for vulnerable populations is important in its own right, it can also be a catalyst for achieving the other SDGs.

Over the past year, FANTA continued to provide support for reaching the global nutrition goal by strengthening the evidence base for effective multisectoral nutrition interventions, and providing technical assistance to improve national nutrition governance and coverage and scale up evidence-based interventions in the countries where we work.

This report presents just a few highlights from the work we did last year—work that led to measurable and substantial results.

Our research in Burundi and Guatemala showed that while there is no “one size fits all” approach, preventive nutrition and health interventions during the first 1,000 days of a child’s life can reduce child stunting and have protective effects on child mortality, maternal and child anemia, and child development in food insecure settings. Our work in Bangladesh showed that prenatal lipid-based nutrient supplements (LNS) reduce newborn stunting, and determined the costs and cost effectiveness of providing LNS to mothers and their children, from pregnancy to 18 months. These research results will inform future nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming.

Building on the evidence and best practices in programming, FANTA helped strengthen nutrition policies, systems, and programs by addressing complex barriers to food and nutrition security in the 17 countries where we worked over the past year. Here are a few examples:

In Ethiopia, we strengthened the capacity of regional health bureaus to sustainably incorporate quality nutrition, assessment, and counseling (NACS) into routine HIV services. In Guatemala, the maternal and child nutrition distance-learning course we designed for frontline healthcare workers in the Western Highlands is being expanded and incorporated into universities and training institutes.

We provided technical assistance to the Malawi government to scale up and intensify nutrition care, support, and treatment (NCST) services for people living with HIV and tuberculosis, helping to identify undernourished and malnourished individuals requiring specialized food support. In Mozambique, we supported development of a national infant and young child feeding strategy.

FANTA led a task force to help develop Tanzania’s first national multisectoral nutrition action plan, and we helped Côte d’Ivoire mobilize resources for its first multisectoral nutrition plan. And we developed resources for stakeholders in Uganda on how to advocate for, plan, budget, build capacity in, implement, monitor, and evaluate multisectoral nutrition activities.

In its final year, FANTA will continue to provide a high level of support to USAID and partners to improve the nutrition and food security of vulnerable individuals, families, and communities.
HIGHLIGHTS

The Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA) is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and managed by FHI 360. FANTA strengthens food security and health policies, programs, and systems to improve the health and nutrition of vulnerable populations facing nutrition challenges. We achieve this by providing high-quality technical assistance to scale up evidence-based nutrition interventions in the countries where we work, while conducting research to further build the evidence base for multisectoral approaches—all in line with USAID’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014–2025. Here are a few highlights from the past year.

Assessing Infant Cognitive Functioning through Eye-Tracking Technique
FANTA partner University of Tampere field-tested a non-invasive eye-tracking method for assessing infant cognitive function in a low-income setting with 9-month-old infants in rural Malawi. The technique proved to be feasible and acceptable among 95 percent of the mothers. A follow-up study examined how maternal and child nutrition, and pre-term births, are associated with a child’s cognitive development at 7 and 9 months. The study showed few associations between eye-tracking-based assessment of visual and cognitive function at 9 months and non-specific risk markers for early child development.

Newborn Stunting in Bangladesh Is Reduced After LNS Supplementation
A major focus of our research with the University of California, Davis, has been determining the effectiveness of LNS for improving nutrition among pregnant and lactating women and their children in Bangladesh, by comparing supplementation of mothers’ and children’s diets with LNS, children’s diets only with LNS, or children’s diets with MNP through 24 months. Study results show that prenatal LNS reduced newborn stunting, and that by adding LNS to the child’s diet, stunting was reduced at 18 months, compared to prenatal iron and folic acid and postnatal MNP supplementation. Both postnatal LNS and MNP improved children’s motor and language development.

Impact of LNS Interventions on Maternal Health and Pregnancy Outcomes in Rural Malawi
Can adverse birth outcomes be reduced through the provision of a small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements (LNS) or MNP during pregnancy? Our randomized, controlled trial of 1,391 women in rural Malawi, conducted with University of California, Davis, and University of Tampere, provided a unique opportunity to study the impact of LNS interventions on maternal nutrition, stress, infection, inflammation, and health, as well as on adverse birth outcomes, including preterm births and infants with low birth weight. The trial was part of the iLiNS research project co-funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Study results showed that prenatal LNS did not significantly improve maternal health or birth outcomes.

Studying the Costs and Cost-Effectiveness of LNS Supplements in Bangladesh
In addition to strengthening our understanding of whether and how dietary supplementation improves the nutritional status of pregnant women and the nutritional status, growth, and development of children under 2 years of age, determining their costs and cost-effectiveness can help assess the sustainability of scaling up such interventions. From our work in Bangladesh with University of California, Davis, we learned that providing LNS to mothers and their children from pregnancy to 18 months through a community health and development program cost US$123 per beneficiary.

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**MUAC Cutoffs Can Be Used to Classify Undernutrition in Adults**

To build the evidence base for establishing global standards for using mid-upper arm circumference cutoffs (MUACs) to classify acute malnutrition among adolescents and adults, including pregnant women, we conducted a two-phase analysis of MUAC cutoffs with Tufts University. The study found that MUAC cutoffs in the range of ≤23.0 cm to ≤25.5 cm have the potential to serve as indicators for low body mass index for the general adult population. Validation studies are needed to determine whether these proposed MUAC cutoffs are also predictive of functional outcomes in different populations and settings.

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**Preventive Nutrition Interventions Reduces Child Stunting**

The Preventing Malnutrition in Children under 2 Approach (PM2A) targets pregnant women, mothers of children 0–23 months, and children under 2 years with health and nutrition interventions. The results of our multi-year research studies in Guatemala and Burundi are in: PM2A works, albeit differently in each country. In Guatemala, PM2A was most effective in reducing child stunting when a full family ration, in addition to an individual ration for the pregnant women or the child under 2 years, was provided. An MNP with 22 micronutrients as the individual ration, along with a full family ration, reduced child stunting with no negative effects on maternal weight and maternal or child anemia. In Burundi, PM2A was most effective in reducing child stunting when rations were provided for the entire first 1,000 days. PM2A also had protective effects on child morbidity, anemia, and child development.

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**Strengthening Monitoring & Evaluation Capacity of Food for Peace Awardees**

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential to the success of Food for Peace (FFP) development food security activities (DFSAs). To support FFP, FANTA conducted in-country M&E workshops that provided awardees with hands-on technical assistance at start up in setting up and customizing effective M&E systems for their specific situation. Our work helped strengthen awardees’ efforts to ensure project effectiveness and accountability.

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**Exit Strategies and Factors for Sustaining Development Food Security Activities**

Perhaps the best measure of the success of a FFP development food security activity (DFSA) is the sustainability of its outcomes and impact. We used the phasing out of DFSAs in Kenya, Honduras, Bolivia, and India as an opportunity to review the exit strategies and sustainability of benefits up to 3 years after the activities ended. From that review, we identified four factors critical for sustaining DFSA outcomes and impacts: sustained source of resources, technical and managerial capacity, motivation of beneficiaries and providers, and linkages to governmental organizations and/or other entities.

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Developing the Next Generation of Nutrition Professionals in Uganda

FANTA implemented the Uganda Nutrition Fellowship program to ready recent graduates for a career in nutrition. A select group of fellows received a unique mix of practical work experience—each was placed inside a hospital, clinic, NGO, or ministry—combined with professional development opportunities such as leadership training, mentoring, and career advice. The host organizations also benefitted: they gained dedicated and motivated staff to support their work to improve nutrition in Uganda. Of the 20 Fellows who completed the program, 19 are actively engaged in the nutrition field, clearly contributing to increased nutrition capacity in Uganda.

Guatemala Maternal and Child Nutrition Distance Learning Course Demonstrates Effective Capacity Building

An evaluation conducted by the USAID Maternal and Child Survival Program found that the maternal and child nutrition distance learning course that FANTA designed improved knowledge and capacity of frontline healthcare workers in Guatemala’s Western Highlands. The evaluation determined that the first graduating cohort increased its knowledge by an average 21 percentage points. In addition, area and district Ministry of Health directors attested to the improved quality of nutrition services among the staff who took the course. Importantly, the evaluators recommended building and expanding on the course and formally incorporating it into universities and training institutes.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

FANTA held two large knowledge sharing events during which we presented our evidence-based research, shared our knowledge products, and showcased our tools with USAID, its implementing partners, and multisectoral nutrition stakeholders.

Presenting the Evidence for Nutrition Interventions in the First 1,000 Days

FANTA presented and discussed findings from and implications of its multi-year studies on the impact and cost-effectiveness of the Preventing Malnutrition in Children Under 2 Approach (PM2A) in Burundi and Guatemala. This knowledge sharing event, held on September 11, 2017, was hosted by FANTA, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), IFPRI, and Mercy Corps, with support from USAID/Food for Peace.

FANTA Knowledge Sharing Event

At our knowledge sharing and dissemination event on September 6, 2017, in Washington, DC, FANTA hosted more than 150 representatives from USAID, its implementing partners, and multisectoral nutrition stakeholders. Attendees participated in sessions about FANTA’s research, multisectoral nutrition activities, and innovative tools, and learned about the impact of our work at the global, country, and community levels.
Application of Quality Improvement Methods Strengthens Malawi’s Nutrition Services

With the goal to reduce Malawi’s mortality rate among children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) to less than 5 percent, we partnered with the Ministry of Health to train health facilities staff in the application of quality improvement (QI) methods to improve nutrition service delivery. Results from this initiative include improved case management of children with SAM and medical complications. In just one year, the number of children within targeted pediatric wards and nutrition rehabilitation units who received initial clinical and medical assessment increased from 7.7 percent to 60 percent.

Helping Côte d’Ivoire Mobilize Resources for First Multisectoral Nutrition Plan

The Government of Côte d’Ivoire and partners, including USAID/Côte d’Ivoire and FANTA, co-sponsored a roundtable meeting in Abidjan to mobilize resources and identify funds to support the country’s first 5-year Multisectoral Nutrition Plan 2016–2020 (MSNP). Representatives from 30 countries attended. In a letter to FHI 360, Côte d’Ivoire’s Prime Minister recognized the technical support we provided to the country’s nutrition program and reported a 77 percent increase in financial commitments to the MSNP by the end of the roundtable meeting.

Responding to the Humanitarian Crisis in Malawi

The El Niño-induced drought in Malawi led to a humanitarian crisis that we addressed by helping the government quickly scale up and intensify its nutrition, counseling, support, and treatment (NCST) services for people living with HIV and tuberculosis. Working with service providers in a number of high-volume health facilities in four districts, we used quality improvement methodologies to systematically identify and address weaknesses in the country’s health care delivery system. This effort greatly increased the number of people living with HIV and TB who had their nutritional status assessed and classified; those identified as moderately and severely undernourished received specialized food support.

FANTA’s great coordination, shared responsibility, and complementarity facilitated the huge scale-up of nutrition, assessment, counselling and support services in Malawi. A lesson to us all that we can do more, together!

Trust Takudzwa Mlambo, Head of Nutrition, World Food Programme, Malawi

FANTA has strengthened our capacity to organize, strategize, and strengthen the health system to prevent and treat malnutrition.

Dr Koffi Ahoussi, Physician, Head of Department of Nutrition, HIV, and Other Chronic Diseases, National Nutrition Programme, Côte d’Ivoire

With FANTA’s help, it was possible to understand the importance of [nutrition] screening. This has contributed to the identification of malnourished children, who are admitted to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Program (Programa de Reabilitação Nutricional) where they have the opportunity for treatment and follow up.

José da Cruz Pedro, focal point for nutrition in Angoche District in Nampula Province, Mozambique

During our partnership, the MGLSD has found in FANTA a partner that is reliable, dependable, competent and results oriented. FANTA is also keen on upholding standards for quality assurance and time management.

Everest Tumwesigye, Commissioner for Community Development and Literacy in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda
COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

GUATEMALA
Effectively improved knowledge and skills of health care workers as highlighted by an evaluation conducted by USAID/Maternal and Child Survival Program of our Maternal and Child Nutrition Distance Learning Course for frontline health workers.

CÔTE D’IVOIRE
Improved the quality of NACS service delivery at 11 targeted sites through implementation of QI initiatives, resulting in 95 percent of people nutritionally assessed and 93 percent receiving nutrition counseling.

ETHIOPIA
Strengthened the capacity of regional health bureaus to sustainably incorporate quality NACS services into routine HIV services.

TANZANIA

MOZAMBIQUE
Supported development of a national infant and young child feeding strategy.

BANGLADESH
Improved monitoring and assessment of nutrition services, and supported data utilization for continuous improvement in nutrition service delivery.

UGANDA
Developed a web-based toolkit for stakeholders on how to advocate for, plan, budget, build capacity in, implement, monitor, and evaluate multisectoral nutrition activities.

TANZANIA
Established a NACS learning site in Rivers State to demonstrate integration of NACS into HIV care and treatment.

MALAWI
Scaled up QI efforts in 44 health facilities to better integrate nutrition into HIV care, and reduce inpatient death rates among children with severe acute malnutrition.

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NIGERIA
Documented NACS best practices from 16 pilot health facilities and subsequent NACS scale-up to over 100 facilities.

BOTSWANA
Developed an integrated nutrition training curriculum with Swaziland National Nutrition Council, Ministry of Health, and partners.

INDONESIA
Provided guidance on the nutrition interventions needed at the district level to improve health and nutrition outcomes and achieve the Minimum Service Standards district health indicators for women, infants, and children.

LESOTHO
Supported strengthening of monitoring and reporting of NACS service provision through training and technical assistance.

SWAZILAND
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Why Is It Important to Prevent Early Childhood Malnutrition? (Video)
FANTA developed an informational video that explains how early childhood malnutrition can be prevented through nutrition interventions in the critical first 1,000 days so that children get the best start in life.

WATCH

Uganda Nutrition Fellowship: Creating Leaders in Nutrition (Documentary)
We implemented the Uganda Nutrition Fellowship program to ready recent nutrition graduates for a career in nutrition. This documentary showcases the program and gives voice to the Fellows, who share the richness of their experiences.

WATCH

Measuring Nutritional Status: How to Use a BMI Wheel (Video)
We developed a video to show how health care workers can use a body mass index (BMI) wheel to calculate BMI and BMI-for-age, as well as determine a client’s nutritional status.

WATCH

Increasing Nutrition Investments in Guatemala: A Call to Action (Video)
FANTA worked with USAID/Guatemala to produce a Spanish-language video that serves as a call to action, and advocates for increased funding for nutrition in Guatemala.

WATCH

Ngoma ya Roho – Dance of the Soul (Film)
FANTA co-produced Ngoma ya Roho—“Dance of the Soul”—a Swahili-language film that addresses the complex issues of undernutrition and stunting and explains why good nutrition matters for early childhood development.

WATCH

FANTA III Project dedicated itself to strengthening the capacity of the Government of Guatemala to focus in an integrated way on nutrition, agriculture, and human resources to address this problem through the 1,000-day window of opportunity for women and children at the local and national level.

German González, Secretary, SESAN, Guatemala
SELECT PUBLICATIONS

Operationalizing Nutrition Assessment, Counseling, and Support (NACS) Guidance in Zambia

Working with the Government of the Republic of Zambia, PEPFAR Implementing Partners, and other key nutrition stakeholders, we integrated NACS into the country’s health policy, planning, and service delivery. This report describes our contributions to Zambia’s efforts to address the nutrition problems of children, women, and people with HIV and TB.

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Integrating and Strengthening Nutrition in Agriculture and Maternal and Child Health Programs in Guatemala

Engaging the Government of Guatemala and partners in multisectoral efforts to address the high prevalence of stunting, we focused on integrating and strengthening nutrition in health and agriculture interventions, targeting women and children in the Western Highlands.

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Systemic Scale-up of Nutrition Programming in Tanzania

Our work in Tanzania focused on strengthening the country’s multisectoral nutrition governance and scaling up its NACS services. In this report, we describe our collaboration with the Government of Tanzania, PEPFAR implementing partners, and local government authorities to improve service delivery at health facility and community levels.

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FANTA in Zambia provided leadership in nutrition technical guidance, materials development, capacity building, and food by prescription. In my opinion, it led the train for changes for nutrition programming in the country in terms of collaboration and technical working group and was at the helm at setting the standards.

Helen Khunga Chirwa, Nutrition Advisor, USAID/Zambia

FANTA has been the first project to solely support nutrition activities in the province. It has been a pleasure working with you. The Southern Province Health Office will uphold NACS and endeavour to sustain activities to improve the health and nutrition of the Zambian people.

Dr. Jelita Chinyonga, Provincial Medical Officer, Choma, Southern Province, Zambia

FANTA support helped shape the agenda so that we now have a way to support nutrition in a multi-sectoral fashion. This wasn’t an easy concept, as it meant changing siloed thinking. Other countries are now coming to ask how we did it.

Obey Assery, Director, Coordination of Government Business Department, Prime Minister’s Office, Tanzania

FANTA are the smartest ones on the block re nutrition in Tanzania, and in general.

Joan Mayer, Adviser on Program Integration and Coordination, USAID/Tanzania, Iringa and Njombe, Tanzania
REACH

17 countries provided with technical assistance

9 national level policies or strategies strengthened

2,884 health care providers and managers trained

32 tools developed

67 new publications

7 articles published in peer-reviewed journals

16 professional conference and workshop presentations

Multisectoral Nutrition Programming: FANTA Achievements and Lessons Learned

The broad scope and range of our multisectoral nutrition programming activities in developing countries are described in this report, as well as the tools and methods we designed to promote country-led, evidence-based, and scalable multisectoral approaches to improve nutrition.

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Strengthening Nutrition Governance: FANTA Achievements and Lessons Learned

Nutrition governance is a core part of our work because it forms the foundation from which developing countries can provide and sustain quality nutrition services at scale. This report describes how we helped strengthen nutrition governance in USAID-priority countries and offers lessons learned to inform future efforts.

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With the support of FHI 360/FANTA, it was possible to improve the strategies implemented... especially in the linear follow-up of enrolled patients in the Nutritional Rehabilitation Program.

Ossufo Juma, nutritionist, and responsible for nutrition in Mecüburi Health Center, Mozambique

The (FANTA) project successfully strengthened the health system, built the capacity of our health workers and nutrition champions who mobilize communities. It has ensured quality nutrition services in the selected facilities and fostered synergy for collaboration among stakeholders.

M. Dominic Elue, Director of Family Health at the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Health
The results of some of our research in Bangladesh and Malawi were published in several high-impact, peer-reviewed journals.

**OCTOBER 2016**

*Applied Environmental Microbiology*

Distinguishing the Signals of Gingivitis and Periodontitis in Supragingival Plaque: A Cross-Sectional Cohort Study in Malawi

**MARCH 2017**

*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*

Home Fortification during the First 1,000 Days Improves Child Development in Bangladesh: A Cluster-Randomized Effectiveness Trial

**APRIL 2017**

*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*

Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplementation in the First 1,000 Days Improves Child Growth in Bangladesh: A Cluster-Randomized Effectiveness Trial

**JUNE 2017**

*Journal of Nutrition*

Daily Consumption of Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplements Containing 250 μg Iodine Does Not Increase Urinary Iodine Concentrations in Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Bangladesh

**JULY 2017**

*Journal of Nutrition*

Prenatal Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplements Do Not Affect Pregnancy or Childbirth Complications or Cesarean Delivery in Bangladesh: A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Effectiveness Trial

**AUGUST 2017**

*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*

Effect of a Package of Health and Nutrition Services on Sustained Recovery in Children After Moderate Acute Malnutrition and Factors Related to Sustaining Recovery: A Cluster-Randomized Trial

*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*

Trial of Ready-to-Use Supplemental Food and Corn-Soy Blend in Pregnant Malawian Women with Moderate Malnutrition: A Randomized Controlled Clinical Trial