

FANTA III

FOOD AND NUTRITION  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



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# Uganda Nutrition Fellowship 2015–2016

## Year Two Report

### *Creating Leaders in Nutrition*



## Introduction

The Uganda Nutrition Fellowship (UNF) is an innovative capacity-strengthening programme that targets university graduates who are studying nutrition to join a contingent of future leaders in nutrition. Every year in Uganda, more than 60 students graduate with a degree related to nutrition, the majority of whom study at Kyambogo and Makerere universities. While the graduates of these programmes have a solid theoretical grounding in nutrition, they receive little practical, real-world experience or mentorship.

In 2010, in collaboration with stakeholders, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA) initiated a Nutrition Internship Program to provide recent graduates with a unique combination of training and experience. Eight nutrition graduates were placed for 12 months at agencies including the Ministry of Health (MOH); Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF); National Planning Authority (NPA); and two national nutrition professional bodies—Uganda Action for Nutrition and Uganda Dietetics Association. The programme was well-received and strengthened the graduates' professional capacity in nutrition service delivery, health promotion, and nutrition in the context of public health and disease prevention programmes, but it lacked the mentorship, leadership, and teamwork experience needed to create the next generation of leaders; interns simply filled a human-resource gap and did not receive the type of professional experience necessary to advance their development as nutrition practitioners.

Drawing on recommendations from programme pioneers, consultations with stakeholders, and collaboration with partners, in 2013 FANTA transformed the Nutrition Internship Program into the Uganda Nutrition Fellowship. During the 2013-2014 UNF programme, for the first round of the programme, 8 nutrition graduates were attached to 7 nutrition-sensitive organisations for 12 months, and were provided with mentors and professional skill-building sessions vital to develop skilled nutrition leaders. Building on what was learned in the first year of the programme, FANTA started the second round of the programme in April 2015, placing 12 Fellows at 10 host organizations for 18 months.

## Fellowship Objectives

The UNF had two objectives: (1) Develop skilled nutrition practitioners by providing a unique mix of practical experience, professional development activities, leadership training, experience sharing, technical training, and mentorship, and (2) Provide host organisations with highly motivated and well-qualified young professionals who will support their nutrition work.

## Selection Process

The selection of host organisations and Fellows for the second round was competitive. To attract candidates, advertisements were placed in the local print media and on the Uganda Action for Nutrition Society (UGAN) website in February and March of 2015. As part of their application, host organisations were required to provide an outline of the specific activities the Fellow would perform, as well as the name of a supervisor and mentor at the host organisation who would work closely with the Fellow.

The FANTA team received and reviewed approximately 84 applications from graduates in nutrition, food science, public health, and food technology. Twelve host organisations applied, including government entities, development partners, community-based organisations, and organisations in the private sector.

The guidelines for selecting Fellows were: (1) The applicant must be a recent nutrition graduate (that is, he or she received a bachelor's degree in Nutrition or Food Science and Technology in 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015) and (2) The applicant must have a minimum of second-class degree of interest (or credit for non-classified bachelor's degrees) and preferably less than one year of relevant work or internship experience. In addition, the team conducted interviews to determine each candidate's commitment and interest in participating in the UNF programme.

Host organisations were selected using pre-determined criteria that included assigning a mentor/supervisor to the Fellow, having a mission related to improving nutrition in Uganda, demonstrating enthusiasm to host a Fellow, and providing a clear and detailed work plan of activities and opportunities from which the Fellow would learn.

**Table 1: UNF 2015–2016 Host Organisations and Fellows**

Name of Host Organisation	Name of Fellow
USAID/Community Connector Project	Apio Benardate Okiria
	Haidar Luboobi
USAID/Strengthening Partnership Results, Innovation in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) Project	Brendah Nanteza (hired by Host Organisation as a full-time employee after 12 months)
World Vision/Uganda	Bridget Kezaabu
Mwanamugimu Nutrition Unit–Mulago	Phoebe Nabunya
	Polline Kabengano
International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)	Moses Kalungi
Ministry of Health, Aids Control Programme	Deborah Faith Nabalayo
Ministry of Health, Nutrition Division	Winnie Nambassa
USAID/Uganda Communication for Healthy Communities program	Lydia Pedun Aisu
Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries	Hillary Byamugisha
USAID/Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA)	Esther Kusuro

## Understanding between FANTA and Host Organisations

To ensure a smooth-running programme, the host organisations and FANTA signed a letter of collaboration that detailed the roles and responsibilities of the host organisations, FANTA, and the Fellows. Host organisations committed to providing the Fellows with all the necessary resources to execute assigned activities, as well as professional and technical leadership. FANTA committed to providing overall support, coordination, and planning for the programme, including supporting the Fellows with a monthly stipend based on the salary of an entry-level nutritionist in the MOH. FANTA also organised professional development activities and addressed any challenges as they arose.

## Administrative Operations

Orientation of the Fellows and host organisations took place in April 2015 in Kampala, and was attended by the Fellows and the host organisations' mentors and supervisors. The purpose of the orientation was to provide an opportunity for Fellows to meet their mentors and supervisors, understand UNF objectives, set goals, develop work plans, and learn about planned programme activities.

To streamline UNF activities and reporting, FANTA provided work plan templates, timesheets, and monthly reporting templates. Throughout the fellowship, Fellows submitted timesheets and activity reports on a monthly basis.

**Table 2: Uganda Nutrition Fellowship 2015–2016 Timeline of Activities**

	Activity	Date
1	Orientation for Fellows and Host Organizations	March 31 and April 1, 2015
2	Start Date for Fellows	April 2, 2015
3	UNF Retreat #1 (2-day retreat)	July 7–10, 2015
5	Site Visits	July and August 2015
6	Professional Development Workshop (5 days)	September 14–18, 2015
7	UNF Retreat #2 (3-day retreat)	February 8–10, 2016
8	UNF Retreat #3 (3-day retreat)	August 23 - 30, 2016
10	Professional Development Workshop (5 days)	May 23–27, 2016
11	Retreat #4 (Final Retreat, 2-day retreat)	August 31–September 1, 2016
12	Graduation	October 12, 2016

## Professional Development

To enhance Fellows' skills and competencies, the UNF secretariat organized retreats and professional development workshops. Fellows were also required to initiate, complete, and present a project that would innovatively address a challenge facing their host organisation.

**Retreats:** Two 3-day and two 2-day retreats were held throughout the fellowship. The retreats provided Fellows with the opportunity to share information about their progress at the host organisations; build skills in leadership, management, writing and communication; discuss professional development workshop themes; and work on UNF projects.





*Mwanamugimu team (mentor, supervisor, and UNF alumni) work with a Fellow to develop a workplan.*



*Fellow Apio Benardate Okiria, attached to USAID/Community Connector, presenting to the group during a retreat.*



*Fellow Hillary Byamugisha, attached to MAAIF, presenting his UNF project during project evaluations.*



*During a retreat, Fellows Apio Benardate Okiria and Phoebe Nabunya demonstrate handwashing as part of Apio Benardate's UNF project.*

**Professional Development Workshops:** Two 5-day professional development workshops were conducted in September 2015 and May 2016. The workshops involved interactive-learning sessions, experience sharing, and team-building activities. They focused on strengthening the knowledge and skill levels of Fellows in communication, leadership, management, organisational behaviour, gender, and climate change. The workshops also included an update on current developments in nutrition. The first workshop’s learning sessions covered leadership, management, research methods, and gender integration. The second workshop focused on aspects of organizational culture, including ethics and conflict resolution. The UNF secretariat shared information on the adverse effects climate change has on nutrition. Fellows also had an opportunity to review the status of the goals they set at the start of the fellowship, review work plans, and continue work on their UNF projects.



*Team-building activity—“Egg drop challenge” during the professional development workshop.*



*Team-building activity—“Marshmallow tower challenge” during the professional development workshop.*

**UNF Projects:** As a requirement for completing the Fellowship, each Fellow chose a topic for his or her UNF project, which needed to innovatively address a challenge identified at their host organisation. Working on these projects gave Fellows an opportunity to refine skills in research, critical thinking, writing, and communication. The projects covered a range of topics, including policy implementation, value chains, health communication, and community-based interventions focused on improving nutrition. Once completed, the Fellows presented their UNF projects to a panel, which then evaluated the projects based on pre-determined criteria. The Fellows with the three highest-ranking projects received a recognition award at the graduation ceremony: Haidar Luboobi, attached to USAID/Community Connector, had the most outstanding project, followed by Lydia Pedun Aisu and Apio Benardate Okiria.

Table 3: Titles of Fellows' UNF projects

Name of the Fellow	UNF Project Title
Hillary Byamugisha	Profiles of Stakeholders Engaged in Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Programs in Uganda
Lydia Pedun Aisu	Home Visit Discussion Guide; Targeted Message Guide for Pregnant Women and Caretakers of Children 0 – 5 years
Phoebe Nabunya	Data Collection Tool on Care Practices in Out-Patient Therapeutic Care
Bridget Kezaabu	Mama Food Kit; A Pocket Guide for Mothers and Caregivers
Apio Benardate Okiria	Using Evidence from Family Life Schools Registers to Identify Critical Points for Improving Attendance in the Family Life Schools
Kalungi Moses	Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Service and Breastfeeding Room Framework at IBFAN Uganda
Esther Kusuro	Recommendations for Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Approaches for Nutrition, Lessons from HIV and Gender in Tanzania and Kenya
Winnie Nambassa	Improving the Availability of Updated Nutrition Reference Materials at the Ministry of Health
Haidar Luboobi	Using Evidence from Family Life Schools Registers to Identify Critical Points for Improving Attendance in the Family Life Schools
Faith Deborah Nabalayo	A Directory of Nutrition Stakeholders Supporting the Health Sector in Uganda
Polline Kabengano	Improving Follow-up of Out Patient Therapeutic Care (OTC) clients at Mwanamugimu Nutrition Unit to Reduce Default Rates

**Mentorship and Teamwork:** Fellows benefited from the valuable professional advice and perspective provided by their mentors and supervisors at the host organisations and the UNF secretariat. The mentors and supervisors held monthly check-ins with the Fellows to discuss their activities, review their work plans, discuss goals, and address any challenges they faced. The mentors and supervisors also advised Fellows about their professional careers and navigating day-to-day operations at their host organisation. In addition, during the fellowship, the mentors and supervisors provided technical assistance on individual UNF projects.

Teamwork was incorporated throughout the UNF professional development workshops and retreats through experiential learning, group activities, working as a team to share UNF experiences, and developing UNF projects.

## The UNF Experience

Fellows were exposed to a diverse range of nutrition topics including policy development and coordination, outpatient care and clinical management of acute malnutrition, and implementation of preventive measures at the community level.

### Policy Development and Coordination

Two Fellows, Deborah Faith Nabalayo and Winnie Nambaasa, were placed with the MOH AIDS Control Programme and MOH Nutrition Division respectively, where they supported various aspects of policy development, implementation, and coordination of nutrition activities and annual events. They contributed to the development of their host organisations' work plans and the development, review, and updating of various policy documents and training materials. Winnie and Deborah also participated in trainings for health workers.



During the fellowship, the MOH commemorated World Breast Feeding Week, an annual event held in the first week of August. The event is aimed at promoting and supporting breastfeeding with the goal of re-establishing a global breastfeeding culture and providing support for breastfeeding everywhere. Winnie and Deborah organized all of the event activities, mobilised resources, and coordinated the event with various partners. Event activities included a media dialogue and press conference on raising awareness on breastfeeding, technical visits to the parliamentary breastfeeding corner to promote mother-baby friendly workplaces, and an awareness walk that included the Minister of Health for Primary Health care.

Winnie and Deborah were instrumental in the technical reviews, updating, and finalization of the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition Guidelines and Training Package for Uganda. They also helped train health workers on the revised Nutrition Assessment and Counselling Package and development of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials for the Karamoja region.

Winnie and Deborah were also involved in mobilising and coordinating key nutrition partners. This involved keeping records of dialogues and meetings, gathering print materials for the MOH mini-library, and developing concept notes and speeches for nutrition-related activities and events. Winnie and Deborah also supported the launch of home fortification with micro-nutrient powders and the 9th IBFAN Africa Regional Conference.

Fellow Hillary Byamugisha was attached to the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). Hillary was instrumental in the development of work plans, concept notes for various activities, and the monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the Ministry including the Monitoring and Support Supervision Tool for Integrating Food and Nutrition Security and Early Childhood Development into Community Development Programming. Hillary also supported the sector in training agricultural extension officers on relevant documents, such as the Guidelines for Integrating Nutrition in the Agricultural Enterprise Mixes. He also participated in support supervisions and routine food and nutrition surveillance activities.

### Treatment of Malnutrition

Phoebe Nabunya and Polline Kabengano were placed as Fellows with the Mwanamugimu Nutrition Unit at Mulago National Referral Hospital. Both were involved with inpatient and outpatient management of acute malnutrition, which included food demonstrations, nutrition education for caregivers, nutrition screening and categorisation of patients, review of patient charts to monitor feeding, monthly reports on caseload, and nutrition management. Phoebe and Polline also participated in training of trainers on NACS and management of outpatient care centres. In addition, they took part in the training and follow-up of health service providers and orientation of interns and visiting students at the health unit. As a result of these experiences, Phoebe and Polline were able to identify knowledge gaps among service providers and propose solutions to narrow those gaps. They were also involved in community outreach to provide nutrition education on the prevention of malnutrition through maternal nutrition and infant and young child feeding.

Phoebe and Polline supported the MOH to ensure quality service delivery for nutrition through support supervision visits. This included reviewing support supervision tools, traveling to health facilities to meet with staff, and conducting support supervision visits. Some of the discussions at health units covered the practical measures to address the high default rates in the Out-patient Therapeutic Care (OTCs) clinics and how to address cases of relapse. As a result of these support supervision visits, Phoebe and Polline's skills and confidence in communication, negotiation, and mobilization were greatly enhanced.



## Social and Behaviour Change Communication

Behaviour change communication is critical to influencing habits and motivating the adoption of essential nutrition actions. Lydia Pedun Aisu and Moses Kalungi, who were placed at USAID/Communication for Healthy Communities Project (CHC) and the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), respectively, contributed to changes in the attitudes and behaviours of beneficiaries. They did this by using various approaches, such as food demonstrations (including preparation of highly nutritious meals for children) and nutrition education on maternal nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, sanitation, and hygiene. Lydia and Moses participated in developing simple messages for various target audiences to promote positive nutrition actions. Lydia supported her host organisation in the integration of nutrition into family planning and maternal, child health, and nutrition messages. She also played a key role in the development of the 'Obulamu Nutrition Guide', which was designed for village health teams and tailors nutrition messages for caretakers of children under 5 years.

Moses was instrumental in the development of the IEC materials for World Breastfeeding Week and supported the coordination of the 9<sup>th</sup> IBFAN Africa Regional Conference. He also helped establish a website for IBFAN. Lydia and Moses also participated in trainings and community mobilisation activities using IEC materials and identifying champions who can advocate for improved nutrition practices in the communities.

## Value Chains

Fellow Bridget Kezaabu, who was attached to World Vision in northern Uganda, worked with 'mother care groups' to promote essential nutrition actions at the household level. Bridget conducted nutrition education on balanced diets and back yard gardening, and through World Vision provided seeds to households to boost food production. She also worked with small- and medium-sized food processors to manufacture nutritious flour to increase protein intake among children and caregivers and so prevent malnutrition. The process included developing guides and conducting consultations among households and small- to medium-sized enterprises to identify the major staples milled, as well as acceptable and affordable combinations of staples needed to meet dietary requirements.

## Multi-sectoral Nutrition Implementation

Three Fellows were placed with host organisations that support strengthening multi-sectoral nutrition implementation at both national and district levels: Esther Kusuro with FANTA, and Haidar Luboobi and Apio Benardate Okiria with the USAID/Community Connector Project in Lira District.

Esther contributed to FANTA's work to strengthen nutrition governance at the local government level by providing technical support to districts developing their five-year District Nutrition Action Plans (DNAPs). She supported 10 districts whose DNAPs were passed by the district councils. Esther also supported the orientation of nutrition implementing partners, district nutrition coordination committees, and the entire district leadership on advocacy for nutrition. In addition, she was instrumental in developing a streamlined approach to sustaining district nutrition coordination committees. Esther's UNF project focused on strengthening and sustaining multi-sectoral approaches for improved nutrition in Uganda.

Haidar and Apio Benardate supported the implementation of the Family Life Schools (FLS) approach in the districts of Lira, Oyam, Dokolo, Kole, Nebbi, Pader, Kiryandongo, Agago, Masindi, Kabale, Kamwenge, Kisoro, Ibanda, Kasese and Kanungu. The FLS approach aims to build essential skills needed for optimal nutrition and health during the first 1,000 days. The approach includes three classes: 'Mama class' (pregnant women and the spouses), 'Baby class' (mother with infants 0 to 6 months and spouse), and 'family class' (mothers with children 7 to 24 months and spouse). Through

the FLS approach, Haidar and Apio Benardate supported community outreach events for health and nutrition services. During these events, they supported health workers in carrying out routine screening of children for acute malnutrition and would refer to the health facility if they deemed the child to be moderately or severely malnourished. They also held demonstrations to teach community members to prepare nutritionally rich foods for children under 5 years. Haidar and Apio Benardate also undertook a project to improve attendance in the FLS and made recommendations to their host organisations.

### Capacity Strengthening

All of the Fellows participated in several capacity-strengthening activities during their placements. Fellows with the MOH participated in technical working group meetings that provided oversight and guidance on the implementation of various nutrition activities in the country. At the district level, Fellows supported host organisations in adapting capacity-strengthening tools to the local context. For example, Deborah and Winnie at the MOH supported the process of translating IEC materials on exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding to the Karamoja context. Lydia at USAID/CHC supported the development of tools specific to her host organisation's mandates, which resulted in the 'Obulamu Nutrition Guide', designed for village health teams by tailoring nutrition messages for caretakers of children under 5 years. The technical capacity of Fellows was strengthened through training on NACS, community mobilization for food and nutrition security, integrating nutrition in agriculture enterprise mixes, and nutrition action planning. Fellows were involved with other trainings, either individually or in small groups, including integrated management of acute malnutrition and the baby-friendly hospital initiative. Fellows' skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods were strengthened through their work on their individual UNF projects.

### Skills and Competence Assessment

At the start of the fellowship, Fellows took a self-evaluation to assess their technical competencies and professional skills. This established a baseline in terms of areas that would require professional development throughout the program, and gave the UNF Secretariat information on the areas of focus for the professional development workshops. Professional skills assessed included communication, leadership, management, and accountability. Technical competencies assessed covered components in nutrition program design and implementation, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

Fellows took this self-evaluation again at the end of the fellowship, and expressed increased confidence and knowledge in the assessed technical competences and professional skills due to their involvement in activities such as trainings, workshops, coordinating events, as well as the review and development of nutrition materials throughout the Fellowship.

### Graduation

On October 12, 2016, 11 Fellows celebrated successful completion of the 18-month Fellowship programme. The event began with a poster display of their UNF projects during what was called a gallery walk. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from the Fellows about a topic they selected, what they learned, and what recommendations they made to their host organisations. Once the gallery walk of UNF projects was complete, the ceremony began. The Fellows shared some of the experiences they had over the 18-month programme. And Dr. Robert Mwadime gave the keynote address, encouraging the Fellows to take the lessons learned during the programme and continue to apply them as they move forward with their careers.

Table 4: Where Are They Now?

Name of Fellow	Employment as of January 2017
Byamugisha Hillary	Potato Value Chain Officer for Policy Action for Strengthening Intensification in Cropping Systems (PASIC) Project in Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries
Lydia Pedun Aisu	Technical Associate (Maternal Child Health Nutrition) for USAID's Communication for Healthy Communities Project
Bridget Kezaabu	Self-employed (Progress on the Mama-Food-Kit)
Phoebe Nabunya	Master's degree in public health from Makerere University
Moses Kalungi	Network Marketing-Alliance Global
Apio Benardate Okiria	Volunteer for Uganda Police Force Medical Services outreach in partnership with the USAID's HIWA project
Esther Kusuro	Nutrition Consultant for FHI 360/FANTA Project
Nambassa Winnie	Nutritionist Volunteer at Ministry of Health, Nutrition Division
Polline Kabengano	Self-employed in farming
Haidar Luboobi	Agricultural consultant for Private Education Development Network.
Deborah Nabalayo	Research Intern – Presidential Initiative on Banana Industrial Development

## What's Next for the UNF Programme?

With a total 19 graduates successfully completing the programme and still actively engaged in the nutrition field, the UNF Programme has clearly contributed to improving nutrition in Uganda. In addition to orienting young people to effectively address nutrition issues, the programme has contributed to narrowing the capacity gap for implementing the multi-sectoral Uganda Nutrition Action Plan, as well as reaching the broader public health and disease prevention objectives included in the Second National Development Plan 2015/16–2019/2020.

Nevertheless, the future of the UNF programme is currently uncertain, as the FANTA project is set to end and the country has not yet found a donor willing to invest in continuing the programme beyond 2016.

FANTA Uganda Project Manager Dr. Hanifa Bachou is hopeful that by increasing awareness about the benefits of the UNF programme to the country, a donor will soon be found. Attesting to her commitment to the program, she said, 'A total of 19 fellows who have graduated is a drop in the ocean. We need to find ways of ensuring that the nutrition fellowship program continues beyond FANTA. That may not come cheaply, but what we have learned in the past four years is that if we really invest in these young nutritionists, then the country has a lot to gain.'

FANTA has documented all processes involved in implementing the fellowship to provide a foundation and guidance for any organisation interested in implementing a similar programme. More information on the UNF program is available on the FANTA website (<https://www.fantaproject.org/countries/uganda/uganda-nutrition-fellowship-unf>).

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