The UK's nutrition ODA

UK demonstrates global leadership through Nutrition for Growth (N4G); policy focus is on ‘1000-day window’ from conception to two years of age

Nutrition has become a top priority for the UK government’s development agenda. The Department for International Development (DFID) committed in 2015 “to improve the nutrition of 50 million people by 2020” and updated its strategies toward that overarching goal in 2017 with the position paper ‘Saving lives, investing in future generations and building prosperity – the UK’s Global Nutrition Position Paper’. The paper outlines prioritized support to the ‘1000-day window’ from conception to two years of age, as well as the prevention of “the most severe forms of undernutrition” in children up to age five.

Additional priorities for the 2017-2020 period include:

- “Preventing wasting, micronutrient deficiencies and low birthweight, alongside existing work to prevent child stunting”;
- “Addressing the nutritional needs of women and adolescents, particularly adolescent girls”; and
- “Strengthening the breadth and quality of DFID’s nutrition-sensitive, multi-sector investments as a result of the evidence showing that nutrition-specific interventions will only address 20% of stunting”.

The 2017 position paper also outlines a four-pronged approach:

1. Providing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services together and in the same place to maximize impact;
2. Focusing on reaching the “extreme poor, the most marginalized and those in fragile and conflict affected states”;
3. Supporting government leadership, capacity, and system strengthening;
4. Leveraging private-sector investment.

According to OECD DAC data, the UK spent US$188 million on basic nutrition in 2017, up from US$140 million in 2016 and US$92 million in 2015.

The UK has played a role in mobilizing the global community to combat undernutrition, hosting the ‘Hunger Summit’ during the London Olympics in 2012 and co-hosting the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in 2013, which aimed to galvanize global efforts to tackle undernutrition. At the N4G summit, the UK committed to significantly scaling up its nutrition investments over the period from 2013 to 2020, by

1. providing an extra £375 million (US$483 million) for direct nutrition programs,
2. unlocking a further £280 million (US$361 million) for nutrition specific programs to match new financial commitments by other donors, and
3. providing £604 million (US$778 million) to address the underlying causes of undernutrition over the same period.

The UK is collaborating on the organization of the Global Nutrition Summit in 2020, hosted by the government of Japan. DFID also supports the global ‘Scaling Up Nutrition’ movement and works in more than 15 countries to assist the expansion of nutrition programs.

DFID shapes the UK’s policy on nutrition

DFID is the primary department involved in decision making around nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programs in low-income countries. It works to develop more multi-sectoral, integrated programs within DFID’s programs in partner countries. In DFID’s headquarters, the nutrition team within the Human Development Department leads DFID’s policy engagement, by collaborating with health, agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and social protection programs, among other methods.