

DEEP DIVES

topics



The UK's nutrition ODA

UK nutrition strategy emphasizes the '1000-day window' from conception to two years of age

Nutrition has become a top priority for the United Kingdom (UK) government's development agenda. The UK has played a role in mobilizing the global community to combat undernutrition. The UK hosted the 'Hunger Summit' during the London Olympics in 2012, and in June 2013 co-hosted the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit, which aimed to galvanize global efforts to tackle undernutrition.

At the N4G summit, the UK committed to significantly scale up its nutrition investments over the period 2013 to 2020, by 1) providing an additional £375 million (US\$573 million) for direct nutrition programs compared with 2010 spend, 2) unlocking a further £280 million (US\$428 million) for direct nutrition programs to match new financial commitments by other donors, and 3) providing £604 million (US\$922 million) to address the underlying causes of undernutrition over the same period (2013 to 2020).

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 October 2017 with the position paper 'Saving lives, investing in future generations and building prosperity – the UK's Global Nutrition Position Paper'. The position paper outlines prioritized support to the '1000-day window' from conception to two years of age, as well as preventing "the most severe forms of undernutrition" in children up to age five.

Additional new priorities up to 2020 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"
- "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:

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

According to the 2017 Global Nutrition Report, the UK's nutrition-specific interventions amounted to US\$92 million in 2015 (in current prices), up from US\$87 million in 2014. A further US\$928 million was spent on nutrition-sensitive interventions, up significantly from US\$781 million in 2014 (see box). DFID also supports the global 'Scaling Up Nutrition' movement and works in more than 15 countries to support the scale-up of nutrition programs.

DFID shapes the UK's policy on nutrition

DFID is the key department involved in decision making around nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programs in developing countries. It works to develop more multi-sectoral, integrated programs within DFID's programs in partner countries. Within DFID's headquarters, the nutrition team within the Human Development Department leads DFID's policy engagement, including by working in collaboration with health, agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and social protection programs.

Further information: 'nutrition-sensitive' and 'nutrition-specific' interventions

'Nutrition-sensitive interventions' are those that address underlying causes of malnutrition and take into account cross-sector actions and impacts (i.e., improving access to diverse foods). 'Nutrition-specific interventions' address the immediate causes of undernutrition and have the improvement of nutrition (i.e., support for exclusive breastfeeding, supplementary feeding, etc.) as their primary objective.