

Right2Grow Uganda Annual Report 2023 Summary



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Report submitted by: The Hunger Project

Programme Overview 2023

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1. Programme context

1.1 Changes in the country context

In 2023, Uganda witnessed significant developments in key areas. The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey for 2023 revealed a notable reduction in stunting rates among children to 26%. While Uganda still faces challenges in ending hunger and malnutrition, this achievement marked a crucial milestone, sparking celebrations across the nation and within the Right2Grow program. However, amidst these gains, Uganda faced a setback as the World Bank suspended funding due to human rights concerns stemming from the enactment of the anti-homosexuality law. The World Bank emphasized the importance of inclusivity and non-discrimination, stating that the law contradicted their values. Despite this funding freeze, the Right2Grow program continued its interventions with a commitment to inclusivity. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance took steps to prioritize nutrition interventions by instructing various sectors, including health, education, water, trade, and social development, to incorporate these interventions into their budgets for the fiscal year 2023/24. This move reflected a broader effort to integrate nutrition considerations across different sectors for holistic development.

1.2 Risks and mitigations

During the planning phase, several anticipated risks materialized in 2023, notably the limitation of civic space exacerbated by Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, and the adverse effects of climate change on food production. In response, the country program implemented pivotal mitigation strategies, emphasizing strict adherence to prevailing regulations despite ongoing legal challenges to the aforementioned act. Moreover, the program proactively engaged in ongoing dialogues within climate change technical working groups across target districts, demonstrating a commitment to addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by environmental shifts.

1.3 Implementation challenges

Engagement of private sector partners at the community level was limited due to lack of well-functioning networks at local level and unclear roles at the start of the programme. The profit-driven nature of the private sector further complicated involvement in non-profit activities. To address this, the Right2Grow Uganda consortium collaborated with the Ministry of Trade Industries and Cooperatives to establish Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Networks, facilitating partnerships between Right2Grow and private sector entities. Budget cuts at the local government level posed challenges for Right2Grow's advocacy efforts in WASH and nutrition, as funds were diverted to other priorities. Community-led advocacy initiatives focused on evidence-based approaches to ensure recognition of nutrition and WASH amidst competing demands. Despite favorable rainfall, heavy localized downpours led to flooding, damaging infrastructure and displacing households. The closure of key roads disrupted field operations for three weeks, prompting collaboration between Right2Grow and the government to establish alternative routes for staff, ensuring continuity of program implementation.

1.4 Cross cutting issues

At the community level, Right2Grow partners ensured inclusive participation of men, women, and youth, with deliberate efforts to engage them in all activities and encourage their free expression of views. Community structures, such as Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Taskforces, include representatives of women and youth, who actively addressed gender-related concerns affecting access to nutrition and WASH services. Through locally-led research, gender dynamics in accessing nutrition and WASH services were explored, yielding recommendations for promoting access within cultural norms. Partners facilitated community dialogues on climate change adaptation, resulting in demands for technical support in climate-smart agriculture. Collaboration with district agricultural offices ensured the incorporation of climate-smart agriculture approaches into demonstration gardens, promoting sustainable farming practices. Sensitization sessions on organic agriculture and the use of drought-resistant seed varieties were also encouraged to mitigate environmental challenges.

2. Programme results

2.1 Demand and investment in basic social services for nutrition and WASH (Pathway 1)

- Facilitating Dialogue Between Stakeholders:** Interface meetings and PhotoVoice gallery walks served as platforms for engagement between community members and duty bearers. These sessions not only highlighted existing interventions but also identified gaps in government service delivery systems. Through dialogue, actionable steps were outlined to address these gaps. For example, repairs were made to non-functional boreholes, and budget allocations were earmarked for essential projects such as water scheme construction. Community advocacy efforts also led to tangible results such as the construction of an electric fence around Murchison Falls national park and the implementation of by-laws to safeguard food security.
- Enhanced Media Campaign on WASH & Nutrition:** A robust media campaign was launched across various platforms to amplify the critical link between WASH and nutrition. This included commemorating events like World Food Safety Day and Global Handwashing Day with targeted messaging aimed at increasing public awareness. Collaboration with government ministries and targeted communication to stakeholders responsible for food safety played a vital role in advocating for policy implementation and enforcement.
- Scoping Study:** A thorough scoping study conducted in Kamwenge District identified innovative approaches in the domains of nutrition, food security, and WASH. These approaches included promoting fortified foods consumption, small-scale animal rearing schemes, and innovative land utilization strategies. In the WASH domain, strategies ranged from mechanizing high-yield water sources to establishing WASH clubs and promoting proper handwashing practices.
- Launch of Zero Stunting Campaign:** The Zero Stunting Campaign, launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, aims to significantly reduce stunting among children under 5. The official launch garnered significant attention and support from various stakeholders, setting a strong foundation for concerted action towards combating stunting.
- Raising Awareness on WASH:** Media engagements and training sessions focused on raising awareness about the critical nexus between WASH and nutrition. Targeted training sessions on key methodologies like Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) were conducted across multiple districts. Additionally, youth festivals prioritized climate change issues, advocating for sustainable practices such as renewable energy sources and recycling.

Table 2.1 showing pathway 1 results

Code	Indicator	Baseline value	Target (year 3/overall)	Year 3 achievement	Notes/ comments
R2G.OC.1.1:	# of actions in which communities formulate demands for improved (WASH and nutrition) services.	0	25	27	Community initiatives improved water access and conservation across districts: Busiraba Sub County funded water scheme land titles; Kyarugubi Village borehole repaired; Kahunge borehole fixed and water source fenced; Nwoya district built electric fence around Murchison Falls National Park; Purongo Sub-County enacted food security by-laws; Kisiita Health Centre III installed water tank; and ten water springs renovated in various districts.

R2G.OC.1.2:	# of barriers to good nutrition and/or WASH services successfully addressed by joint community and private sector initiatives.	0	21	23	Advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Health culminated in the development and launch of the Zero Stunting Campaign Strategy by R2G Uganda.
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2.2. Civil Society Empowerment (Pathway 2)

- **Photovoice Training:** The program focused on empowering CBO partners with skills in photovoice methodology, a participatory research technique where participants capture images to highlight community realities. This training aimed to equip representatives with the ability to visually document service delivery gaps in their communities and advocate for policy changes based on evidence.
- **Training on Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET):** Workshops were conducted to train participants in BMET, enabling them to monitor public spending on food security, nutrition, and WASH initiatives. The outcomes of these workshops included tangible commitments from local authorities, such as the recruitment of nutritionists in health centers and earmarking funds for essential data collection.
- **CBO Capacity Building:** Annual programme review meetings and capacity development sessions were held to strengthen the capabilities of CBO partners. These sessions facilitated reflection on past achievements and challenges, enhancing skills in resource mobilization, organizational development, and communication. CBO partners also received coaching on effective communication strategies for advocacy purposes. This included training on capturing impactful photos and utilizing various media tools to document success stories and advocate for policy changes.
- **Support for CSO Nutrition Platforms:** Collaborative efforts supported CSO Nutrition platforms, providing a platform for stakeholders to develop position papers advocating for increased budget allocations in Nutrition and WASH. These platforms facilitated dialogue and coordination among stakeholders to drive policy changes at the district level. Regular meetings were convened to address emerging nutrition-related issues and develop strategies for supporting CSOs in drafting and approving Food and Nutrition District regulations. These meetings fostered collaboration and alignment with district priorities, leading to the development and approval of regulations aimed at improving nutrition outcomes.

Table 2.2 showing pathway 2 results

Code	Indicator	Baseline value	Target (year 3/overall)	Year 3 achievement	Notes
SCS031:	# of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or creating space to engage at national and international level.	0	36	39	Advocacy efforts to recruit Nutrition Officers in multiple districts have yielded commitments for recruitment. Ministry of Health and other ministries have developed and endorsed the Zero Stunting Campaign Strategy. Engagement with the budget committee of the National Parliament resulted in the adoption of

					18 out of 26 presented recommendations, indicating impactful advocacy efforts.
SCS032:	# of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate, and/or creating space to engage at the sub-national level.	0	36	40	Increased participation in Sub-County and district planning meetings, with Nutrition, Food Security, and WASH Action Plans integrated into District Nutrition Action Plan (DNAPII). 20 advocacy spaces for CSOs have been secured, and simplified local government budget guides have empowered citizens to engage in budget processes effectively.
SCS041:	# of advocacy initiatives carried out by CSOs, for, by or with their membership/constituency at national level.	0	45	48	Advocacy efforts secured commitments from MPs to accelerate pending bills and policies following a CSO High-level Dialogue on Public Financing for FNS/WASH. Position papers resulted in 36 proposals adopted for action. The 2nd National Agricultural Strategy now includes an objective aimed at enhancing food safety coordination and nutrition-sensitive extension services, highlighting a comprehensive approach to addressing food security and nutrition challenges.
SCS042:	# of advocacy initiatives carried out by CSOs at sub-national level.	0	60	69	Advocacy efforts focused on establishing and revitalizing District Nutrition Coordination Committees (DNCCs) and Subcounty Nutrition Coordination Committees (SNCCs) to bolster nutrition agendas. Additionally, revamping the CSO SUN network led to recognition by the Office of the Prime Minister and equal partnership in the SUN agenda.

2.3. Adoption and mainstream of multi-sectoral approach to undernutrition (Pathway 3)

- **Support to local government structures:** Training sessions were conducted to empower local nutrition coordination committees (DNCC, SNCC, PNCC) and community members to monitor service delivery and advocate for improvements. By enhancing their skills in areas like Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), participants were better equipped to identify gaps in WASH and nutrition services and push for necessary changes.
- **Policy Advocacy through By-laws:** Enacting by-laws at the local level aimed at promoting food security, hygiene, and sanitation represents a grassroots approach to addressing these issues. These regulations not only set standards for individual households but also provide a legal framework for ensuring compliance and accountability.
- **Community Engagement and Accountability:** Initiatives like the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) process facilitated meaningful dialogue between communities and duty bearers. Through these engagements, community members were empowered to voice their concerns and hold authorities accountable for delivering on their commitments, leading to tangible improvements in WASH services.
- **National Campaigns and Advocacy Efforts:** By commemorating events like World Breastfeeding Day and launching campaigns such as the Zero Stunting Campaign, the consortium aimed to raise awareness about key nutrition issues and mobilize support for interventions. Media orientation sessions further amplified these efforts by equipping journalists with the knowledge and tools to report effectively on nutrition-related matters, thereby influencing public opinion and policy decisions.
- **Engagement with Uganda Parliamentary Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security:** The Right2Grow program supported the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security (UPA-FNS) in organizing the 2023 Uganda Parliamentary Nutrition Week, aiming to raise awareness about nutrition and food security issues. Over 200 participants attended, including MPs and government officials. Key achievements included presenting a statement on nutrition issues in parliament, hosting the first consultation meeting on the Food and Nutrition private members bill, and conducting a press conference. The week contributed to advancing momentum for passing the Food and Nutrition Bill and updating national policy.
- **Budget Advocacy:** District budget conferences were held in Kabale, Nwoya, Buliisa, Kamwenge, and Kakumiro, which served as platforms for department heads and CSOs to present budget allocations and position papers to prevent project duplication. Verbal commitments were made by key duty bearers to prioritize certain initiatives in the upcoming budgets, such as rehabilitating non-functional boreholes and improving water access. Additionally, CSO retreats were organized and focusing on developing position papers to influence the National Budget Framework Paper (NBFP) for the fiscal year. These retreats aimed to ensure that the needs of marginalized and poor Ugandans are reflected in the annual budget. Another aspect involves pre-budget dialogues aiming to increase citizen participation in national planning and budgeting processes while assessing the NBFP's responsiveness to economic and social needs.

Table 2.3 showing pathway 3 results

Code	Indicator	Baseline value	Target (year 3/overall)	Year 3 achievement	Notes/ comments
R2G.OC.3.1:	# of laws, and policies implemented for sustainable and inclusive development.	0	2	3	The President signed the Public Health Amendment Bill 2022, incorporating Right2Grow's recommendations. The Ministry of Finance mandated UNAP implementing Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to prioritize nutrition in their budgets for FY 2023/24. Food and nutrition were

					integrated into the Parish Development Model Programme, with nutrition coordinators to be included in Parish Development Committees.
R2G.OC.3.4:	Percentage of public budgets allocated and implemented for nutrition and WASH services (increased funding).	0	WASH: 110% FSN: 10%	WASH: >10% FSN: >10%	Collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Environment led to a 110% budget increase for agro-industrialization and water supply. The Agro-Industrialization program budget rose by 25.06% in FY 2023/24, with UGX 2.2 trillion allocated for food security and other sectors. Adoption of R2G recommendations for FY 2022/23 by the Budget Committee resulted in a 38% budget increase for Rural/Urban Water Supply and Sanitation.

2.4. Donors and international development actor’s coordination to address the underlying determinants of undernutrition (Pathway 3)

- **National Nutrition Symposium:** A symposium with development partners like USAID, WHO, WFP, UNICEF, and the Uganda Private Sector Foundation resulted in commitments from development partners and donors to increase institutional funding for nutrition. Presenters highlighted their investments in various sectors and urged collaboration with the Government of Uganda.
- **UN Water conference:** The programme supported our national partner CIDI to participate in the 2023 UN Water Conference, where a high-level dialogue on Uganda's response to conflicts and climate change's impact on water services was held. Assessments were conducted in Bugweri and Kabale districts to bridge the gap between decision-making and ground realities, presenting community-led solutions at the UN.
- **Nutrition Financing Landscape:** a study on the nutrition financing landscape in Uganda was commissioned to generate financial evidence for nutrition, food security, and WASH donor financing. This evidence aims to engage donors in increasing investment in these areas, aligning with the Right2Grow project's objectives.
- **Landscape Analysis:** World Vision Uganda partnered with the Movement for Community-led Development (MCLD) to conduct a landscape analysis of stakeholders in Kamwenge, Kakumiro, and Buliisa districts. The analysis identified issues such as duplication of work, limited financing to community-based organizations, and uncoordinated planning of nutrition and WASH activities. The results will inform lobbying efforts to better align funding and programming with priority actions.

Table 2.4 showing pathway 4 results

Code	Indicator	Baseline value	Target (year 3/overall)	Year 3 achievement	Notes/ comments
R2G.OC.4.1:	Level of success of lobby and advocacy roles by R2G and its partner towards	0	3	4	Efforts involved coordinating the Right to Food Cluster's participation in the Universal peer review process, resulting in 9 recommendations adopted

	donors and international actors.				in the National Commitment report to the UN. Support was given for drafting and submitting a CSO position paper on the Right to Adequate Food to the United Nations. Collaboration between THP-Uganda, ACF, and UNICEF focused on improving nutritional governance in select districts.
R2G.OC.4.2:	Degree of integration of the WASH-Nutrition nexus by donors along the humanitarian-development nexus to address the underlying determinants of undernutrition.	0			The UN Country Food System, co-organized, saw Uganda adopting all 6 recommendations, including initiatives for consumer awareness, agricultural digitalization, and urban farming. 3 out of 5 recommendations from youth-led food systems dialogue were adopted, focusing on early warning systems, urban agriculture promotion, and ICT investment.

3. Advocacy Initiatives, impact stories and learning

Country advocacy priorities encompass collaboration with the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security (UPA-FNS) to support the passage of the Food and Nutrition Bill into law, alongside strengthening local legislation for WASH and nutrition through CSO platforms. Additionally, championing the Zero Stunting Campaign is emphasized. The adoption of the Bridge for Voices (B4V) Approach integrates social accountability models like Community Voice and Action (CVA) and Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET), empowering communities to advocate for their needs. Through capacity-building in BMET, communities engage in local government processes, leading to tangible improvements in WASH and nutrition investments, demonstrating the impact of community-driven advocacy.

The program launched the Zero Stunting campaign strategy in partnership with the Ministry of Health to promote optimal nutrition practices among pregnant, lactating mothers, and children under 5, garnering commitments from government agencies and civil societies to combat stunting in Uganda collectively. This initiative emphasized the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to address malnutrition effectively. Moreover, collaborative efforts with CSO stakeholders focused on increasing investment in food, nutrition, and WASH sectors, leading to the development of position papers to influence budget allocations at the national level. Notable improvements in budget allocations and accountability were observed at the sub-county and district levels, with support from The Hunger Project Uganda and World Vision Uganda in enhancing financing and legislation for food security, nutrition, and WASH. Additionally, Action Contre la Faim's (ACF) integration into the Ministry of Health Technical Working Group contributed to crucial provisions related to both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions in the revised Food and Nutrition Bill of 2003.

3.1. Reflection on learnings and communication of results for scaling

Reflecting on internal learning, our country program has successfully empowered community structures such as CBOs and CVA Practitioners in budget analysis, enabling them to advocate effectively for improved budget allocations for WASH and Nutrition. However, challenges such as decreasing budget ceilings pose obstacles to successful advocacy efforts due to conflicting priorities. Moving forward, continuous sensitization of duty bearers on the critical role of WASH and nutrition in various sectors like health, education, and livelihoods is essential. Additionally, efforts will be made to bolster advocacy with current evidence to enhance the prioritization of community issues amidst competing priorities. Despite challenges, the program has established strong networks and coalitions with stakeholders, although enlisting partner commitment remains a challenge. Transparency in sharing work plans and MOUs is crucial for better planning and alignment. Furthermore, while advocacy platforms like DNCCs and SNCCs have become influential voices, low district and sub-county budgets hinder implementation processes. Engaging development partners and securing coordination financing for nutrition interventions at the sub-national level is vital. Involving CBOs in planning and implementation has been instrumental, and increased budget allocation to tier-3 partners is necessary to manage operational overheads effectively. Supporting CBO partners in growing their capacities, including fundraising, will be prioritized to sustain their impact.

3.2. Change Story: Impact story: Ending Open Defecation at Kabolwa Market

In Kabolwa Market, located in Buliisa Sub County, Buliisa District, the absence of a public latrine led to open defecation, posing health risks and discomfort for residents. "The situation was very bad in the market especially when it rains, the smell due to open defecation was unbearable," recalls Thomas Lukuma, a resident of Kabolwa Trading Centre. Through the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Model, community members engaged with local authorities to address the issue. "During a community gathering in Kabolwa trading centre, citizens asked the District to construct a public pit Latrine in the market to address the bad practice of open defecation" (Asiimwe Muhereza, LC1 Chairperson of Kabolwa) Following community gatherings organized by CVA practitioners, residents prioritized the need for a latrine, prompting action from district officials. "I presented this concern during our Sub County Council meeting, in agreement the council approved an urgent construction of a Pit latrine," says Mr. Kamanda, chairperson LC3 Buliisa Sub County.



Figure 3.1: The LC1 chairman and his Vice posing in front of newly constructed pit Latrine in Kabolwa trading centre.

With support from the District Water and Sanitation Conditional Grant, a 5-stance pit latrine was constructed in June 2023, alleviating health concerns and improving sanitation in the market. "I no longer jump human dung when in the market and no bad smell in the area that contaminates our food," says Kusiima Joy, a 38-year-old female resident of Kabolwa Village. The success of this initiative highlights the power of local advocacy and community engagement in driving positive change.

4. Partnership and collaboration reflections

In 2023, the programme deepened its engagement with tier 3 partners, increasing the number of CBO partners to 20. This expansion not only broadened the program's reach but also reinforced the philosophy of shifting power dynamics within the partnership. By involving more stakeholders at both the national and sub-national levels, the program aimed to promote collective ownership and decision-making. The partnership with the 20 CBOs builds local capacity to sustain the gains made at the community level, emphasizing the importance of long-term sustainability in development efforts. A significant focus for the program was to empower stakeholders through capacity-building initiatives and participatory decision-making processes. This involved mutual capacity-building initiatives, such as the BMET and CVA training sessions, which aimed to enhance partners' skills in budget advocacy and social accountability.

Additionally, decision-making processes increasingly involved stakeholders at the community, sub-county, and district levels, ensuring that their voices were heard and considered.

National partners played a crucial role in consortium engagements, taking the lead in programming and implementation. They actively participated in national dialogues, media engagements, and parliamentary committees, showcasing their growing influence and leadership within the partnership. One notable development was the inclusion of the Movement for Community Led Development (MCLD) as a national partner. With support from R2G, MCLD transitioned to operate independently, focusing on institutional and programmatic development. This move signalled a commitment to strengthening local partners and decentralizing program operations. Collaborations with other strategic partnerships and CSOs, such as CASCADE and WeAreAble, aimed to leverage comparative advantages and share best practices. These partnerships facilitated learning exchanges and fostered synergies across thematic areas, contributing to more effective advocacy and programming. R2G Uganda maintained cordial relations with the Dutch Embassy, participating in consultation meetings and partnership visits. This engagement reflected a commitment to collaboration and alignment with broader development priorities.

5. Programme reflections

Reflecting on the program's journey, we've witnessed remarkable successes in fostering collaborative partnerships between community structures such as CVAs and CBOs and duty bearers, resulting in proactive advocacy efforts at the district level. Notably, CBOs have taken leadership roles in chairing District CSO platforms and actively participating in key local government planning and budgeting events, effectively representing community priorities. Moreover, the successful transfer of knowledge on nutrition and WASH practices to community members by CBOs, exemplified by CBO's adoption of demonstration gardens in Kisiita Sub County, highlights the programme's impact on grassroots empowerment and behaviour change. The institutionalization of a multi-sectoral approach, exemplified by active district and national-level platforms like DNCCs and CSO nutrition platforms, underscores the program's commitment to holistic development. While commendable progress has been made in implementing program objectives, challenges such as the need for enhanced private sector engagement and ensuring accountability for stakeholder commitments remain pertinent. Valuable lessons learned, including the importance of deliberate inclusion of vulnerable groups and gender mainstreaming, underscore the program's commitment to equity and inclusion. Looking ahead, efforts to promote sustainability and local ownership through capacity-building initiatives for CBOs and the establishment of institutional structures signal a promising future beyond the program's duration.

6. Conclusion and way forward

In conclusion, the program has made significant strides in achieving country advocacy objectives, particularly in fostering community empowerment and multi-sectoral collaboration to address nutrition and WASH challenges. Despite challenges such as decreasing budget ceilings, the program has established strong networks, empowered community structures, and influenced policy changes at various levels. Moving forward into 2024-2025, the program will prioritize strengthening advocacy efforts with current evidence, enhancing private sector engagement, and ensuring follow-up on stakeholder commitments. Adjustments in programming, such as increased capacity-building for CBOs and transparent sharing of work plans, will be made to address emerging challenges and sustain the program's impact. The focus remains on promoting sustainability, local ownership, and inclusive development practices to ensure lasting change beyond the program's duration.

The 2023 budget performance, at 91%, is deemed acceptable, but there is a need for vigilant spending oversight for the forthcoming implementation of the 2024 budget. Aligning projections for 2025 with current allocations is crucial to prevent exceeding the five-year funding amount, maintaining fiscal responsibility and sustainability. Both 2024 and 2025 are projected years, with performance expected to match these projections, ensuring prudent financial management over the funding period.