

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Leader of the Opposition
accountability, that's why they are b

EDITORIAL

Don't relent on nutrition drive

This week, the Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health, Dr Charles Olaro, revealed that two million children in Uganda are stunted due to malnutrition. Dr Olaro, who was speaking during the launch of the national nutrition advocacy campaign dubbed "Nutrition in Kampala on Tuesday this week, highlighted that there is a sharp regional variation in malnutrition, with Karamoja, Tooro, and refugee-hosting districts being most affected.

One of the leading causes is inadequate dietary diversity. Dr Samalie Namukose, the assistant commissioner-in-charge of nutrition at the ministry, said about 26 percent of Ugandan children are stunted. That means they are too short for their age. She said four percent of Ugandan children are wasted, meaning they are too thin for their height. Karamoja Sub-region has been named as the region with the most stunted and wasted children.

While it is undeniable that efforts are being made to change the story of nutrition in the country, gaps that must be quickly and effectively filled still exist. The Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP) II 2020/2021-2024/2025 highlights key contextual challenges, such as cultural and social norms and economic conditions, which negatively affect feeding practices, low literacy levels, and ignorance, leading to low utilisation of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services by communities, and inadequate participation of women in development and income-generating activities.

The issue:

Nutrition

Our view:

Investing in nutrition and nutrition improvement programmes will pay off in the long term as it contributes to a healthier populace, which in itself is an asset in the form of quality human capital and reduces healthcare needs and costs.

It also mentions low literacy levels and ignorance leading to low utilisation of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services by communities and inadequate participation of women in development and income-generating activities.

These are only a few of the challenges listed in the plan. This is clearly a work in progress, and since the existing gaps are known, it should be easier to change the trajectory. The education and sensitisation projects and initiative by different stakeholders should continue, but more importantly, programmes should be designed to address the persistent roadblocks to change. Nutrition financing is also another issue that must not be thrown by the wayside or trivialised.

We must put the money where the statistics are bleeding the most. Investing in nutrition and nutrition improvement programmes will pay off in the long term as it contributes to a healthier populace, which in itself is an asset in the form of quality human capital and reduces healthcare needs and costs.

According to the United Nations Children Fund, Uganda is among the 20 countries in the world with the highest burden of malnutrition, which threatens to destroy a generation of children.

To achieve UNAP II's vision, which is: 'A well-nourished, healthy and productive population effectively participating in the socio-economic transformation of Uganda', all stakeholders must be seen to be prioritising nutrition when it comes to policy making and financing.

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