



SALEM BROTHERHOOD (UGANDA) Ltd KOLONYI.

Children's and youth welfare, Health & Medical Services

P.O Box 1558 Mbale Uganda East Africa, Kolonyi-Nakaloke Tel. 0705005595/0772505595

SUCCESS STORY

Title: Training Health Workers on the Management of Malnutrition in the different health facilities

A Training Success story from Salem Brotherhood Uganda, Management of Malnutrition Project

Back ground

In the districts of Mbale, Budaka, Butebo and Bukedea in the Mbale sub region, Malnutrition has been a persistent challenge, especially among children under five years of age. Despite efforts to address the issue, inadequate training for health workers on effective malnutrition management remained a gap. This story highlights the success of a health workers training program by Management of Malnutrition Project which significantly improved the management of malnutrition at lower health facilities and in the communities.

A comprehensive training program was organized to equip them with skills to identify, manage and prevent malnutrition in their communities, ultimately leading to significant improvements in nutritional status of children and women of child bearing age.

The problem

In the Mbale sub- region with its 1,440,000 inhabitants, around a fifth of residents are severely or moderately affected by malnutrition. According to the baseline study of the 2021 pilot project, around a quarter of children under the age of 5 in the four project districts of Mbale, Budaka, Bukedea and Butebo are malnourished, with 7.4% suffering from severe acute Malnutrition and 16.2% from moderate malnutrition leading to high mortality rates, compromised immune system, stunted growth and increased comorbidity infections.

Health workers from these areas though dedicated, lacked the specialized skills to identify and manage malnutrition effectively leading to delayed interventions and increased health risks. Despite their commitment, health workers faced challenges like;

Limited knowledge on the latest Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition guidelines

Inadequate resources to conduct proper screenings and offer dietary guidance

Lack of community awareness regarding the importance of balanced nutrition for young children

The solution

In response to this critical need a holistic training on IMAM Guidelines was developed. The goal was to enhance the skills of the health care workers from the 15 health facilities including Clinical Officers, Nurses, Midwives, Health Inspectors, Health Assistants and Health Information Assistants to improve their capacity in managing Malnutrition at the health facilities.

Implementation

The training was conducted in the districts of Budaka, Butebo, Bukedea and Mbale City in which 4 health facilities that had high cases of Malnutrition in their catchment areas were selected. These Health facilities are located in sub counties with highest rates of child malnutrition

A total of 75 Health workers from 15 health facilities were trained and these included Facility in charges, Enrolled Midwives, Enrolled Nurses, Health Assistants and Health Information Assistants as shown in the table below.

DISTRICT	DATE OF TRAINING	VENUE	NUMBER OF H/WS TRAINED
Butebo	28 th -30 th OCT 2024	3DAYS Hotel	18
Bukedea	31 st NOV-2 nd OCT 2024	BUKEDEA DISTRICT HALL	20
Budaka	4 th -6 th NOV 2024	LINCO INN	20
Mbale City	28 th -30 th NOV 2024	MOUNTAIN INN NAMAKWEKWE	17

The training was delivered in a series of interactive workshops that focused on real-life scenarios faced by health workers

A critical element of the training was the practical approach with health workers performing MUAC screenings, identifying signs of Malnutrition and creating treatment plans

The program

The training aimed to equip health workers with skills and knowledge to effectively assess, treat and prevent malnutrition. The program was designed with several key components.

Theoretical Education: Health workers learned about the causes, signs, and stages of malnutrition including the difference between acute and chronic malnutrition

Practical Skills. Health workers were trained on anthropometric measurements (such as weight, height, and Mid –Upper arm circumference) to assess nutritional status and identify children at risk of malnutrition

Nutritional Counseling: Health workers were equipped with the tools to educate parents and caregivers about infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices, including exclusive breastfeeding, appropriate complementary feeding and importance of micronutrients.

Case management: The training covered treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) as well as use of therapeutic feeds.

Community Engagement: Health workers were trained on how to engage community members through awareness campaigns on the importance of nutrition, and access to clean water

Results

By the end of November 2024, over 75 Health workers across the 4 districts were successfully trained on the new IMAM guidelines. The impact was felt in the four districts at the health facilities and in communities in several key areas.

- **Improved Early Detection and Diagnosis.**

Health workers do routine screening of malnutrition at all points at both the health facilities and during outreaches

Cases of malnutrition have started coming up and referral of complicated cases are being effectively done to Salem Kolonyi Hospital for further management and health center fours.

- **Improved Nutritional Practices**

With improved counseling skills, health workers are educating parents on the importance of balanced diets, proper breastfeeding practices, and complementary feeding practices.

- **Community awareness:**

Through community sensitizations and awareness on proper nutrition, Families are able to make the right food choices, identify the malnutrition cases of marasmus, kwashiorkor, micronutrient deficiencies and adopted a health seeking behavior

- **Sustained Impact**

Health workers acquired knowledge and skills that they are able to conduct CMEs at their health facilities to combat the knowledge gap

Lessons Learned

The success of health workers training offered valuable insights and lessons that will be applied to future initiatives as follows

Comprehensive Training is Essential

Malnutrition Management requires a broad understanding that goes beyond clinical treatment. Training must address both the identification of malnutrition using simple screening tools and

the practical aspects of its management including nutrition education, community outreach, and psychosocial support.

Community Engagement Drives Success:

Malnutrition is not only a healthcare issue but also a social one. Engaging communities, particularly caregivers and parents in the training process is crucial for long-term success

When health workers are actively involved in community education, the whole community becomes part of the solution

Community support ensures that families understand the importance of nutrition and are motivated to change to change their behaviors.

Practical, Hands on Training Works

The most effective way for health workers to learn is through direct hands on experience, particularly when it comes to skills like measuring Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), conducting weight –for- height assessments, and administering Ready to use Therapeutic Feeds (RUTF)

Ongoing Mentorship is Crucial

Training should not end after the workshop. Capacity building, refresher courses and support supervisions are essential for knowledge retention and reinforce learning hence addressing challenges that arise in the field.

Data Collection and Monitoring Drive Improvement

Data collection and monitoring systems should be integrated into training programs to track progress, evaluate effectiveness, and identify gaps in knowledge.

Collaboration Enhances Program Success.

Collaboration between healthcare professionals, local authorities, other implementing partners and communities leads to successful malnutrition programs.

Call to Action

Empowering Health Workers, Transforming Lives: “Join us in supporting the continued training of health workers, ensuring they have the skills to save lives and combat malnutrition in vulnerable populations”.

Conclusion

This training initiative was a resounding success, by equipping health professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge, there has been a dramatic improvement in the child health outcomes. This success story highlights the importance of empowering frontline health workers

and the lasting impact of well-designed training programs in addressing public health challenges.

The training not only saved lives but also created a foundation for sustainable change in the fight against malnutrition.

Through sustained investment in nutrition education and capacity building, we can continue to make strides toward eliminating malnutrition in vulnerable populations

As one health worker, Dauda Kiuluka, put it: “Malnutrition has been an overwhelming problem that has increased the mortality and morbidity rates among children under 5 years of age, but now, we are equipped and prepared. We know what to do, and we see the difference in the cases we are managing”.

PHOTO GALLERY







Compiled by
BABIRYE SARAH JUDITH
TRAINING COORDINATOR