
Allocating Money for Better Nutrition in Nigeria

By SPRING/ Nigeria



Photo: SPRING/Nigeria

Ms. Kush, LGA nutrition officer for Jos South, helped implement the *Nigeria Community Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Package* in Jos South.

“Until we recognize the magnitude of the nutrition problem and [commit resources to] tackle it, improvement in health outcomes will continue to be a mirage.”

--Ms. Kush, Jos South LGA nutrition officer

Prioritizing Nutrition

Competition for scarce resources within local governments is a common challenge. How, then, did Jos South Local Government Area (LGA) in Nigeria’s Plateau State come to prioritize improved nutrition by allocating funding for infant and young child feeding (IYCF) activities for the first time?

The journey to funding for Jos South IYCF activities began with the promotion of the *Nigeria Community Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Package*. In April 2015, the USAID-funded Strengthening Partnership, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project started to introduce the nationally approved package in Jos South through a series of advocacy and sensitization meetings with the LGA director of primary health care and the nutrition focal person (NFP) or the nutrition officer.

The counseling package helps health workers and community volunteers bring consistent feeding and nutrition information and support to caregivers. SPRING had implemented the package in a number of other states and was scaling up implementation in Plateau State, Jos. Our experience in other states and LGAs taught us that these initial advocacy meetings with LGA leaders, highlighting the nutritional status of children and their mothers in the LGA, were essential to gaining buy-in for implementation of package. Advocacy meetings also promoted the allocation of local funds for nutrition to support and sustain IYCF service delivery in the primary healthcare center (PHC) and the community during and after the completion of the counseling package rollout.

Funding Acquired

Project efforts led to the government of Jos South LGA allocating one million naira (about 3,000 USD) to nutrition programming in the 2016 budget. These funds support IYCF activities for communities and help promote nutrition practices in the area following training with the package. This provision is an acknowledgement of nutrition as a priority in the Jos South LGA communities. The allocation also marks the first time that nutrition has been included in the Jos South LGA budget.

SPRING's Continued Support

SPRING has trained 62 government officials, health workers, community workers, and staff of civil society organizations in Plateau State on the use of the IYCF counseling package and established 356 community IYCF support groups, reaching more than 2,260 children under two years of age. Following the trainings, SPRING continued to build the capacity of health workers and local government staff on community IYCF by mentoring, supervising, and coaching the NFP and health workers in conducting IYCF in Jos South LGA and throughout the state. Although the SPRING project is closing in Nigeria in November 2016, we believe that the leaders in Jos South LGA understand the importance of ongoing support for IYCF and will continue to promote this effort.



Local government funding helps make nutrition programs sustainable. Here a community volunteer talks to women in Nigeria about optimal infant and young child feeding.

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