

How Can Different Groups and Organizations Work Together to Improve Nutrition?

Malnutrition has many causes, and recent evidence shows that addressing malnutrition requires commitment from actors across multiple sectors such as agriculture, education, and health. But how can these diverse partners, who have their own distinct aims and ways of working, come together towards this common goal of ending malnutrition?

For the past three years, SPRING, USAID's global multi-sectoral nutrition project, has worked with countries around the world to answer that question. If we understand why and how different organizations collaborate, we can more effectively facilitate efforts to reduce malnutrition. Specifically, SPRING looked at how collaboration to improve nutrition has been put into practice in Guatemala, Rwanda, and Bangladesh.

Our findings can help other countries encourage partners from different sectors to work together for improved nutrition. SPRING focused not just on "why," but "how"—how is multi-sectoral collaboration best put into practice?

Through our assessment, we pinpointed structures, processes, and practices that can facilitate or hinder successful collaboration, and then identified six opportunities to improve collaboration at three key stages: design, implementation, and monitoring.

While SPRING's report describes each of these opportunities in full, let's take a closer look at one of them right now. Why is it important to Develop a Practical Strategy? Observations across the countries suggest that a collaboration strategy for nutrition should be inclusive, understandable, measurable, and responsive. Each is key, but what do we mean when we say understandable? It entails defining common terms and expectations with everyone involved. This is crucial, because we found that people use the same words, but with different meanings. If everyone doesn't have a common definition and understanding of terms - like coordination vs. collaboration vs. integration for example - it will be difficult to collectively move toward a common goal, which is imperative for successful collaboration.

To learn more about our work in three countries and all six recommendations for enhancing multi-sectoral collaboration to improve nutrition globally, you can read the full report on the SPRING website.