Nutrition Workforce situation analysis in Zambia

Main Authors: George Blaire, UNICEF, Tropical Health Education Trust, World Food Programme, PATH and Health Partners International.

Summary Presentation by Vincent Chowa at the Nutrition Symposium at Cresta Golfview Hotel Lusaka.

26th May 2016
Presentation outline

• Context of the study

• Rationale

• Methodology

• Major findings
Context of the study

• 46.7% of children under 5 years are stunted, 6% acutely malnourished or wasted and 13.3% Underweight.

• The Zambian government is committed to halving the number of stunted children by 2023. This would require a reduction of 2.5 percentage points a year.

• In June 2013, at the high-level Nutrition for Growth event held in the UK, the government of Zambia committed to resolve the human resource gaps in the five key line ministries responsible for delivering nutrition interventions.
Rationale

• Commissioned to support the Government of the Republic of Zambia’s commitment to address and quantify human resource gaps in the Nutrition Sector.

• Accomplished by reviewing the current nutrition workforce in the line Ministries including MAL, MoH, MCDMCH, and Education.

• Funded by the UK Department of International Development.
Methodology

The methods included;

• Assessing the requests and the needs for increasing staff numbers
• Producing a plan to fill up any justified gaps
• Assessing the capacity of education facilities to deliver qualified staff in order to achieve the staffing targets.
Methodology cont.

The report is based on

• literature review,

• an analysis of available workforce statistics obtained from Ministry human resources information systems and payroll data, personnel files

• and interviews with key respondents.
Major Findings

Staff numbers and workforce profile

• For nutritionists in Zambia, 259 of 342 establishment positions approved within the government workforce are filled, resulting in a vacancy rate of 24 per cent (83 vacant posts).

• Approved government establishment posts are inadequate to serve the need for nutritionists nationwide; the numbers of nutritionists within current national workforce amounts to approximately 1.8 staff per 100,000 population,

• but if the target establishment was filled, this value would only increase to 2.4 per 100,000. Recommendation; find ideal numbers for nutritionist for the nutritionists/dietitians
Major Findings

Staff numbers and workforce profile *cont*----

- There are no comparative statistics available on nutritionists from similar countries.
- Posts at district-level are particularly difficult to fill.
- A majority of nutritionists are diploma holders; 82% of nutritionists are on salary scale MS08.
- There are very few higher-grade nutritionist posts in the relevant ministries.
- A public-sector hiring freeze is currently in effect until at least 2015, preventing the hiring of new staff.
Major Findings

Staff numbers and workforce profile *cont----*

- A range of health workers are trained in basic nutrition interventions, and provide support to nutritionists by implementing these activities at the facility level.
- Donor support was provided to create a salaried, community level health worker (Community Health Assistants) to implement a range of primary health care interventions at community and health post level.
- A review has been undertaken by VSO to understand the landscape for community-level staff and increase their coordination and effectiveness.
Figure 1. Age Profile of Nutritionists
Age profile of Nutritionist

- The high percentage (45 per cent) of staff within the 25–29 age range is a reflection of a recent increase in the number of nutritionists employed.

- This is a skewed age profile, and means that a significant portion of the nutrition workforce is largely inexperienced and likely needs strong supervision to ensure the delivery of quality services.
Major Findings
Education and Training

• The main source of trained nutritionists in Zambia is the NRDC, a 3-year diploma course, delivered under the MoA. Usual intake 150 students per year, which was reduced to 105 in 2014.

• A large number of diploma-level nutritionists choose to upgrade their qualifications via in-service training to degree at UNZA by taking on a four-year BSc nutrition course, which takes 5 years for school-leavers to complete.

• This does not add to the total stock of nutritionists and is an inefficient use of training resources.
Figure 2. Education qualification of nutritionists.
Major Findings
Education and Training cont--

• Under the funding from SUN for the extension of the UNZA nutrition programme, there is included a consultancy to examine the possibility of better harmonizing the diploma and the BSc, so as to reduce the amount of time needed for diploma holders to complete the BSc.

• The BSc nutrition course has a current average intake of 15 students a year, but has the potential to accommodate up to 20 students per year.
Major Findings
Workforce information, planning and international experience

• There is no workforce plan for nutritionists and no planning has taken place before this exercise in Zambia.

• In 2012, the MoH successfully gained parliamentary approval to fund an additional 2800 positions for health workers, including 43 nutrition-related roles;

• In addition, for nutrition staff to be effective they need to fit into a planned, coordinated and monitored management structure that recognises the importance of the skills that they contribute.
Conclusion

• The Zambian government has demonstrated a serious commitment to reducing the rates of malnutrition by assessing the staff capacity needs in country for the first time.

• Zambia is well placed in that it already has well-regarded training institutions available for the training of these key staff.

• However, a number of significant challenges lie ahead in order to enable us produce adequate numbers of nutritionists with the appropriate skills and levels of training, to fulfil in-country needs.
THE END

THANKYOU