



# Post-Crisis Response to Food and Nutrition Insecurity in The Gambia

## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

JUNE - DECEMBER 2017

### INSIDE STORIES

PAGE 2

WORKING TOGETHER TO  
COMBAT HUNGER AND  
MALNUTRITION:  
LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

PAGE 3

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT  
OF MALNUTRITION, SAVES LIVES

PAGE 4

WORKING WITH VULNERABLE  
HOUSEHOLDS TO IMPROVE  
NUTRITIONAL AND HEALTH  
STATUS THROUGH  
CAPACITY BUILDING AND  
AWARENESS RAISING

PAGE 5

FIGHTING HUNGER,  
MALNUTRITION AND  
RURAL POVERTY THROUGH  
“CASH FORWORK”

PAGE 6

EMPOWERING FARMERS TO  
INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY  
THROUGH FARMER FIELD  
SCHOOL APPROACH

PAGE 7

IMPROVING ACCESS TO QUALITY  
SEEDS AND FERTILIZER FOR  
FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

PAGE 8

HERE'S WHAT EU SUPPORT  
MEANS FOR  
FAMILIES IN THE GAMBIA

### WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

The Gambian Government in close partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on 8 June 2017 launched a project aimed at contributing to the reduction of food insecurity and malnutrition in The Gambia.

The 11.5million Euros European Union funded project is entitled “Post-Crisis Response to Food and Nutrition Insecurity in The Gambia”. The initiative is founded on the basis that the first 1,000 days (conception to two years of age) are crucial in defining children’s future nutrition and health status. Supporting them during these formative days, is key to improving their holistic development. At least 11,000 food insecure households where children 0-24 months are most at risk of malnutrition; both chronic and acute will directly benefit from the initiative in the North Bank, Lower, Central and Upper River regions.

The intervention will strengthen the capacity of vulnerable smallholder farmers to sustainably boost household food security and income and; provide a comprehensive package for the promotion of optimal nutrition and care practices; and Social and Behavioural Change Communication to enhance child and maternal nutrition and health.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



L-R: Saffie Lowe-Ceesay, Minister of Health delivering launch statement, Rupert Leighton, UNICEF Rep (a.i), Omar A Jallow, Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Mariam Jack-Denton, Speaker, National Assembly, H.E, Atila Lajos, EU Ambassador, Perpetua Katepa-Kalala, FAO Rep and Angela Cespedes, WFP Country Director at the project launch

Photo: ©UNICEF/Jama Jack



## WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION: **LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND**

CONTINUATION OF PAGE 1

### Partnerships

The 29-month intervention seeks to reduce malnutrition among children under 2 by addressing both the underlying causes and immediate needs of malnourished and at-risk households. It is being executed by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP) and The United National Children's Fund (UNICEF) according to their corporate mandates, expertise and comparative advantages. FAO serves as the the lead agency.

The project is being implemented in close partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture (and its specialized units), the National Nutrition Agency, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the National Disaster Management Agency, The NGOs, The Farmer Based Organizations and the Women's Health, Productivity and the Environment NGO (BAFROW).

### Alignment with Gov't's priorities.

The project is hinged on The Gambian Government's drive towards the attainment of food and nutrition security as articulated in its development framework. It is also in line with a policy commitment made by the EU in 2012 to contribute to building the resilience of vulnerable communities by addressing the root causes of food insecurity. The initiative is also aligned to pillar 2 [Sustainable Agriculture and food Security] and pillar 3 [Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Management and Disaster Risk Management] of the UN - Gambia development cooperation for the period 2017 - 2020.

### Project Steering Committee

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) comprising the key

project stakeholders (EU Delegation, UN, government, NGOs, and civil society) was set up prior to the project launch. The committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Health, is the overall body responsible for oversight, policy guidance and coordination. The committee met twice in 2017.

### Statements at the Project launch in Brief

In her keystone statement, Ms Saffie Lowe-Ceesay, Minister of Health and Social Welfare underlined the importance of good nutrition to the attainment of sustainable development. She spoke of the relevance of the project to the country. Ms Lowe-Ceesay on behalf of The Gambian government and people thanked the EU, FAO, UNICEF and WFP and, other partners for their commitment to the project.

In his welcome remarks, Omar A Jallow, Agriculture Minister explained that the intervention marks an important milestone in our collective effort to tackle food and nutrition insecurity and poverty in The Gambia. Minister Jallow challenged all stakeholders to work collectively for the successful implementation of the project. He argued that the success of the intervention is imperative to sustainably breaking the intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty and hunger.

Perpetua Katepa-Kalala, FAO Country Representative in a joint FAO, UNICEF and WFP statement also underlined the significance of the intervention towards the achievement of national development targets and the SDGs. She lamented that nearly 7 out of 10 people in the rural areas live below the poverty line compared with 1 in 3 in the urban areas.

Attila Lajos, European Union ambassador to The Gambia spoke at length on the rationale, objectives and how the project would be executed by the three agencies (FAO, UNICEF and WFP). He restated the EU's commitment to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition in the world.



A group photo of the dignitaries who attended the project launch at the Kairaba Beach Hotel

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah



# IMPROVING THE NUTRITIONAL AND HEALTH STATUS OF VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND AWARENESS RAISING

Addressing malnutrition requires an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach that goes beyond the health facility level to involve parents, caregivers, and community volunteers. Under this assistance, the focus is on enhanced knowledge on good nutrition and care practices around both prevention and treatment.

The “Post-Crisis Response to Nutrition Insecurity in The Gambia” project also supports the continuation of UNICEF and WFP’s cooperation with The Gambian Government on improving maternal and infant nutrition. Working in partnership with the National Nutrition Agency and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, UNICEF seeks to promote optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) through capacity strengthening of health facility staff on the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI).

## Institutional Capacity strengthening

To improve programme effectiveness, UNICEF and WFP engaged and trained stakeholders at all levels on the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM). At national level, up to nine government institutions including the media were provided with a comprehensive guide on the treatment and prevention of malnutrition. More than one hundred regional health workers, and one thousand, two hundred and fifty-two Village Support Groups (VSGs) and Red Cross Volunteers also received training.



Water reticulation system at Kuntaur Health Centre

Photo: ©FAO/Iousman Bangura



A trained community volunteer screening a child

Photo: ©WFP/Isatou Njai

WFP further provided the VSGs with in-kind support such as motor bikes, chairs and cooking pots to facilitate their support during distributions, follow up home visits and awareness creation.

Since the start of the project, a total of 175 health facility personnel (including nurses, administrators, security personnel, orderlies and drivers) have been trained in the standard protocol on the treatment and management of SAM complications. To ensure that no child is left behind, the project supported the community management of SAM as outpatient treatment by strengthening the capacity of Community Health nurses who conduct biannual screening for MAM and SAM. A total of 775 representatives from Village Support Groups (VSG) have been trained with the expectation that each one will train at least six mothers/caregivers, thereby reaching 4,650 beneficiaries. The VSGs provide a structure for community support to new mothers and caregivers.

## Improving awareness, sanitation

To reach a wider audience and ensure continuity of messaging, WFP and UNICEF worked closely with the Directorate of Health Promotion and Education to highlight key messages on good and sustainable care practices using television and radio spots. With increased knowledge and optimal care, child malnutrition can be prevented or managed.

The project also supported the installation of a water reticulation system at Kuntaur Health Centre, and the rehabilitation of a well at the Centre for Nutrition Recovery and Education (CREN) in Basse.

# PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF MALNUTRITION SAVES LIVES



A child being screened  
Photo: ©WFP/Isatou Njai

## Early Detection, Prevention

Prevention of malnutrition especially among children in The Gambia is crucial. Studies show that 1 in 4 children under 5 are stunted (2015 SMART). In Kuntaur and Janjanbureh Local Government Areas, both in the Central River Region North, show scores above the national average, at 31.5 and 28.6 percent respectively. The prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) is at 10.3 percent, up from 9.9 percent in 2012. Women are also affected. The 2013 National Demographic Household Survey found that 1 in 3 pregnant women and 16 percent of lactating mothers have vitamin A deficiency. Overall, one tenth of The Gambia's population (1.9 million) is food insecure and nearly 1 in 3 Gambians are vulnerable to food insecurity.

Early screening and effective treatment of malnutrition particularly among women and children can save lives, and increase their chances to reach their fullest potential.

Under this EU funded project UNICEF and WFP have teamed up with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the National Nutrition Agency (NaNA), the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), The Gambia Red Cross Society and other relevant partners to help combat stunting.

WFP, UNICEF together with implementing partners successfully conducted a mass screening for symptoms of acute and severe malnutrition among all children under 5 in NBR, CRR, LRR and URR.

The initiative targets an estimated 40, 000 children under two for prevention of malnutrition, more than 16, 000 children under 5 for treatment of moderate acute malnutrition, and 7, 500 pregnant and nursing women for treatment of acute malnutrition. It also promotes and supports the practice of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of a child's life. Between October and December 2017, more that 30, 000 children under two (6—23 months) were provided with fortified nutritious ready-to-use nutrient foods called Plumpy' Sup for the prevention of malnutrition.

## Treatment

5, 565 children were reached with specialized foods for treatment, while 5, 832 Malnourished pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers were given nutrient-rich cereals with vegetable oil. All three categories received this assistance monthly.

On the other hand, children with severe acute malnutrition normally with complications were referred to health facilities for treatment. Those without complications are provided with Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF). Some 5,153 children have been admitted for SAM treatment under this project, out of which 4,197 have already been treated and discharged.

UNICEF made available essential lifesaving supplies (including RUTF, F75, F100, Vitamin A, deworming tablets and antibiotics) for the treatment of SAM at the health facilities and homes.



A health worker in one of the project sites  
Photo: ©FAO/Ousman Bangura



# FIGHTING HUNGER, MALNUTRITION AND RURAL POVERTY THROUGH CASH FOR WORK

## Reducing the impact of floods in rice production areas

CRR has the potentials to meet the country's demand for rice as well as generate a surplus for export to earn the country the much needed foreign exchange. However, in recent years, repeated flooding at the Jahally, Pacharr and Sukuta rice fields in the Central River Region (CRR) had resulted to crop failures and increased food and nutrition insecurity in the area and in the country in general.

In a bid to help contribute towards combating these challenges sustainably, the "Post Crisis-Response to Food and Nutrition Insecurity in The Gambia" project is strengthening the livelihoods of families with malnourished children in the region.

## Provision of technical support

In June, 2017, a technical mission from the FAO West Africa Regional Office for Resilience based in Dakar, Senegal supported the design of the Cash For Work component. The Mission consulted with both the WFP Regional Office in Dakar and the WFP Country Office to learn from the agency's experience in the implementation of such activities.

With technical support from FAO Regional office for Africa (RAF), the rice growers association in CRR were assisted to identify the challenges resulting to low production and low yields in the area. Based on the outcome of these consultations, a Letter of Agreement (LOA) was signed with the Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS) for the selection of beneficiaries and monitoring the implementation of "cash for work" activities aimed at reducing floods in the rice fields. The activities includes canal desilting, dyke repair, culvert construction and rehabilitation of access road to rice fields. Technical supervision is being provided by the Soil and Water Management Unit (SWMU) under the Department of Agriculture.

This partnership between FAO, Government institutions, NGOs and Farmer-Based Groups, promotes full farmer participation in self-help initiatives. The community-participatory development approach is enhancing self-reliance, infrastructural development, and public-private partnership.

## Reducing challenges in rice fields

A 3 km access road to the rice fields is being rehabilitated in Niani Sukuta village in Central River Region North. Similarly, in the Jahally rice zone in Central River Region South, 4 km of tidal irrigation dyke has been cleaned, four additional culverts constructed and irrigation canals de-silted in Sukuta and Jahally. The intervention will help divert the run off water in to the river and thus contribute towards minimizing the incidence of flooding in the area which has been the main driver for low yields in the country's rice basket.

According to Maimuna Ceesay, a farmer from Pacharr Village and Baa Mariga (below in green with spade next to the culvert) from Jahally Village, floods destroyed more than 70 percent of farms and more than 60 hectares of rice fields in the area in 2016 resulting to widespread food insecurity.



Farmers fixing a new culvert to address flooding at the Jahally rice field

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah

## Discouraging rural urban migration, increasing farmers' ability to pay for basic household needs

A total of 397 workers representing 6,164 people from vulnerable households participated in the activities. The intervention also helps in mitigating irregular migration by creating short-term employment. At least 400 people from the satellite communities are also getting fuelwood and extra cash from the sale of the surplus wood from the fallen trees. Each participant in the cash for work scheme receives an average monthly income of about D3,000. People interviewed in Sukuta explained that more than half of the money paid to them is being used to feed families while the balance is used to provide shelter, service debts and pay school fees among other things.

An additional 463 people (representing 8,387 people) have been identified for canal clearing at Pacharr Rice Field. Youths constitute about 75 percent of the participants of whom 90% are men and 10% women. As at end December 2017, about D3.8 million will be received by the communities. The availability of the much needed cash in these food and nutrition insecure households will immensely help in mitigating the effects of the crop failure.



Farmers being paid after participating in Cash for Work

Photo: ©FAO

# EMPOWERING FARMERS TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH FARMER FIELD SCHOOL APPROACH

## Farmer Field School

A weak agricultural extension service is a key contributing factor to low agricultural productivity in The Gambia. The extension-staff-farmer ratio is about one-to-three thousand. With increasing climate change related challenges, disease burdens and declining soil fertility, there is an urgent need to fix the country's agricultural extension system.

## Capacity development

Through the project's support, a Farmer Field School approach is being promoted with a view to complement the work of the agricultural extension system. The innovative and practical initiative enjoys the full support of the Department of Agriculture which provides technical backstopping to the cost-effective platform for enhanced farmer networking and experience sharing.

Seventy-five Farmer Field School facilitators have been trained in improved crop, livestock, nutrition, farming and business techniques. Farmers and agricultural extension agents drawn from across the project intervention regions participated in the six-week intensive training hosted by the Rural Farmer Agriculture Training Centre in Jenoi, Lower River Region. Jennifer Hire, a Consultant hired by the project facilitated the six-weeks intensive trainings conducted in September and October 2017. Resource persons were drawn from the Departments of Agriculture and Livestock Services, Catholic Relief Services, United Purpose, ActionAid The Gambia and FAO.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Attila Lajos, EU Ambassador to The Gambia enjoined the trainees to put the knowledge and skills gained for the achievement of the desired goals.

Perpetua Katepa Kalala, FAO Country Representative restated FAO's continued commitment to partner with all stakeholders to empower farmers for the attainment of the zero hunger targets without leaving no one behind.

Adama Ngum-Njie, Permanent Secretary 2, Ministry of Agriculture and Fanta Bojang Samateh-Manneh, Governor, LRR both paid glowing tribute to FAO and the EU for the assistance and challenged farmers to make good use of the opportunity.

## Scaling up of the FFS approach

Each of the trainees has been provided with inputs and has established a FFS at the community level where 30 farmers are being trained on the FFS methodology with specific focus

on climate smart agriculture, organic farming, integrated Pest Management practices amongst others. The target is to train a minimum of 10,000 farmers.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

A Monitoring and Evaluation team has been set up to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of projection implementation.



Left- Lang Kira Jawla, a Farmer Field School facilitator at Kundam Ma Faaty, URR with Farmers and FAO M&E team at demonstration plots.

Photo: ©FAO/Chery Mecrcy

## Addressing mobility constraints

Lack of mobility remains a key challenge for the effective functioning of the agricultural extension service. In a bid to help address the problem and facilitate the movement of the agricultural extension agents, farmer field school trainers and their supervisor, the project has provided 21 motor bikes and 75 bicycles as well as an assortment of farming implements and stationery for them. Receiving the items, Omar A Jallow, Agriculture Minister again applauded FAO, UNICEF and WFP for the project and the EU for funding it. He called for the judicious utilization of the equipment.



Omar A Jallow, Agriculture Minister receiving the motor bikes and other equipment meant for the Farm Field School Trainers

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah

# IMPROVING ACCESS TO QUALITY SEEDS AND FERTILIZER FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

## Improving access to quality farm inputs

In July 2017, The Gambian Government, through the Department of Agriculture (DoA) received farm inputs worth over D29 million from FAO to distribute to food insecure households. The quality agricultural inputs were provided by the “Post-Crisis Response to Food and Nutrition Insecurity in The Gambia” project. The National Seed Secretariat (NSS) quality control unit sampled the seeds for germination test. The results from Sapu and Kerewan indicate a 98% germination rate, good enough to be accepted as quality seed.

A total of 6,500 households in 7 districts in the North Bank Region (NBR), Central River Region North (CRRN), Upper River Region (URR) and Lower River Region (LRR) benefitted directly from the drought tolerant seed varieties (Groundnut seed, cowpeas, rice and maize) and fertilizer.

Receiving the inputs, Falalo Touray, the then Director General, Department of Agriculture described the intervention as ‘timely’. He conveyed the government’s appreciation to FAO and the EU for the initiative. Touray explained that strengthening the productive capacity as well as building the resilience of the vulnerable poor farmers is key to the fight against food insecurity and poverty. He used the platform to stress that the inputs are only meant for ‘the most vulnerable farmers and households with malnourished children’ and must be strictly distributed as intended. He challenged the regional governors, district chiefs and the regional agricultural directors to ensure that the inputs reach the target beneficiaries and on time.

Perpetua Katepa-Kalala, FAO Country Representative commended The Gambian Government for prioritizing food security and the agricultural sector in general in the quest for sustainable socio-economic growth and development. She reminded farmers of the critical role they could play towards the success of the project which aims to improve food security and reduce stunting among children under the age of two. She encouraged farmers to adhere to the recommended practices (GAPs, nutrition and care) that the project would be promoting. Katepa-Kalala thanked the EU for entrusting FAO, UNICEF and WFP with funds for the execution of the project.

Atila Lajos, EU Ambassador to The Gambia tasked the farmers to make use of the assistance to improve their lives and livelihood. He noted that the project is a follow-up to recent EU funded food security interventions in response to crop failure in The Gambia. He reiterated the EU’s continuous commitment to assist The Gambia combat hunger and malnutrition. Fanta Bojang Samateh-Manneh, Governor, Lower River Region pledged to ensure the inputs reach the ‘right people’.



Falalo Touray, Director General, Department of Agriculture (then) receiving the inputs on behalf of government from the FAO Rep Pepetua Katepa Kalala whilst Governor Manneh, Ambasaador Lajos, others look on.

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah

Inputs distribution in the field

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah

## Towards achieving seed security

FAO in June 2017 signed a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with the National Seed Secretariat (NSS) for groundnut seed multiplication in the quest to contribute towards combating the perennial problem of inadequate quality seed for the farming community. Through the accord, FAO provided 10 tonnes of seeds and 500 bags of fertilizer to the NSS.

The inputs were distributed to 30 (8 of whom are female) selected certified seed producers in WCR, NBR, LRR & CRR. The NSS also cultivated a farm at its research centre at Sapu, CRR South. Certified seed fields located close to NSS stations were effectively supervised by NSS technicians. Other fields were under the supervision of the DOA extension workers.

The NSS farm produced an estimated 29 metric tonnes. The produced would be purchased by the project and redistributed among certified seed producers for multiplication during the next cropping season. However, due to the late start and early seizure of the rains coupled with the dry spell in August and September and the floods in the CRR, productivity has been low.



Inputs distribution team

Photo: ©FAO/

Farmer gathering her harvest at Pacharr rice field

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah



# HERE'S WHAT EU SUPPORT MEANS FOR FAMILIES IN THE GAMBIA



WFP Regional Gender Specialist Raky Chaupin reassures Karou of WFP's support

Photo: ©WFP/Isatou Njai

It is morning in Keur Omar Saine, a small village in The Gambian region of the North Bank not far from the Amdalai border with Senegal. Karou, a mother of four children, takes her six month old set of twins — Fatou and Lamin — to a nutrition support centre for the first time.

*“My twins have now reached the stage when they cannot depend only on breastfeeding to fill their bellies but I do not have the right food to give them in addition to breast milk,”* Karou says.

*“When I heard about the nutrition programme I decided to head early to the centre so that my children can benefit from the support,”* she adds.

At the centre, both Fatou and Lamin are screened for malnutrition. They are very weak and weigh far below the average for their age. They are immediately enrolled for malnutrition treatment where they will receive specialised nutritious foods in what specialist call a targeted supplementary feeding programme.

*“The intercropping of cowpea and maize has helped increased farmers’ yields and reduce soil erosion. It also improves the soil’s fertility, thereby reducing the demand for artificial fertilizer”,* says Mustapha Drammeh, Regional Agricultural Director for NBR.



Mustapha Drammeh, RAD, NBR.

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah

Despite the late start of the rains and the dry spell experienced, we have realized a good har-vest because of the inputs and advice provided by the project and the agricultural field staff.

*“When the maize matured in September, food was scarce. I have a household of ten. The produce reduced our rice consumption daily by 2.5kg. I also donated 50 pans of fresh maize cob to the community. Thanks to this intervention I have enough seed for the next cropping season”,* Says Yerro Loum



Yerro Loum (Centre) of Njau, CRR North and family posing with their maize seeds for the next season,  
Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah



Tumbul Gassama posing with her maturing crops

Photo: ©FAO/Amadou Bah

Tumbul Gassama, Kaif village, Kiang East District, LRR said the assistance has saved her household from a complete crop failure.

*“...I am grateful to Allah, Agriculture, FAO and the donor (EU) for the inputs given to me. The variety is drought tolerant and my produce will sustain my household of ten for three months. From my produce, I am also able to keep seeds for the next cropping season”.*

## For more information please contact:

Perpetua Katepa Kalala  
FAO Country Representative  
Fajara, The Gambia  
Perpetua.KatepaKalala@fao.org  
+2204498034

Sandra Lattouf  
UNICEF Country Representative  
Bakau, The Gambia  
slattouf@unicef.org  
Tel:+2204498831

Angela Cespedes  
WFP Country Director  
Bakau, The Gambia  
angela.cespedes@wfp.org  
Tel:+2204494784