



STRENGTHENING UGANDA'S SYSTEMS FOR TREATING AIDS NATIONALLY



## Strengthening Uganda's Healthcare Systems to Integrate Nutrition Services in HIV Care

The 5-year USAID-funded *Strengthening Uganda's Systems for Treating AIDS Nationally (SUSTAIN)* project supports 13 healthcare facilities (11 regional referral and 2 general hospitals) to provide nutrition services along the continuum of care for all HIV-infected clients.

### Management of Malnutrition

HIV increases susceptibility to malnutrition through increased energy needs, poor nutrient absorption and/or reduced food intake in severe illnesses. Malnutrition, on the other hand, can accelerate HIV progression and worsen its impact by weakening the immune system and reducing the effectiveness of treatment. According to the 2010 Analysis of Nutrition Situation in Uganda report, 20-25% of adults started on antiretroviral therapy (ART) are moderately or severely malnourished, while 30-40% of malnourished children are HIV-infected.

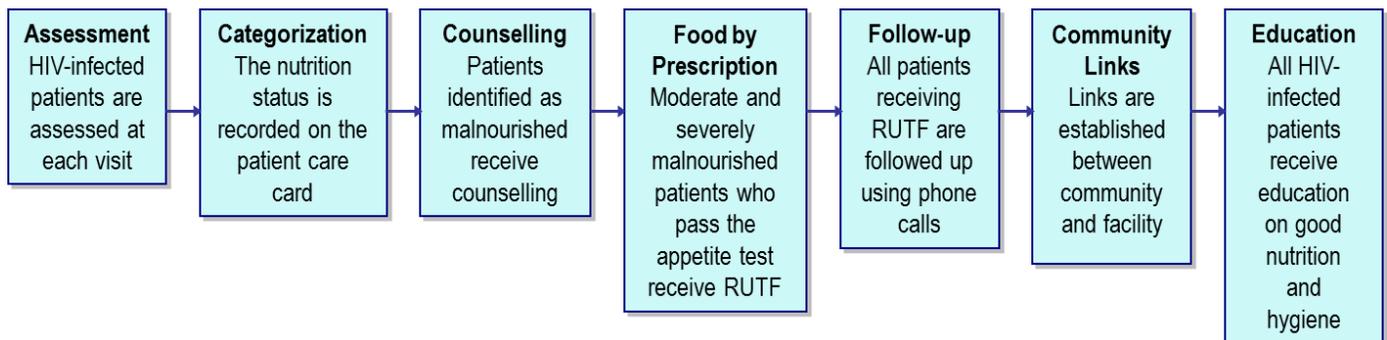
To improve HIV outcomes, the Uganda Ministry of Health has adopted the Nutrition Assessment Counselling and Support (NACS) model, integrating nutrition into HIV care to manage and prevent malnutrition among HIV clients. The NACS approach aims to strengthen the capacity of facility- and community-based healthcare providers to deliver nutrition-specific services to clients.

### Interventions

The USAID/SUSTAIN project supports the Uganda Ministry of Health to implement the Nutrition Assessment, Counselling and Support (NACS) model at 13 public healthcare facilities. The project also supports:

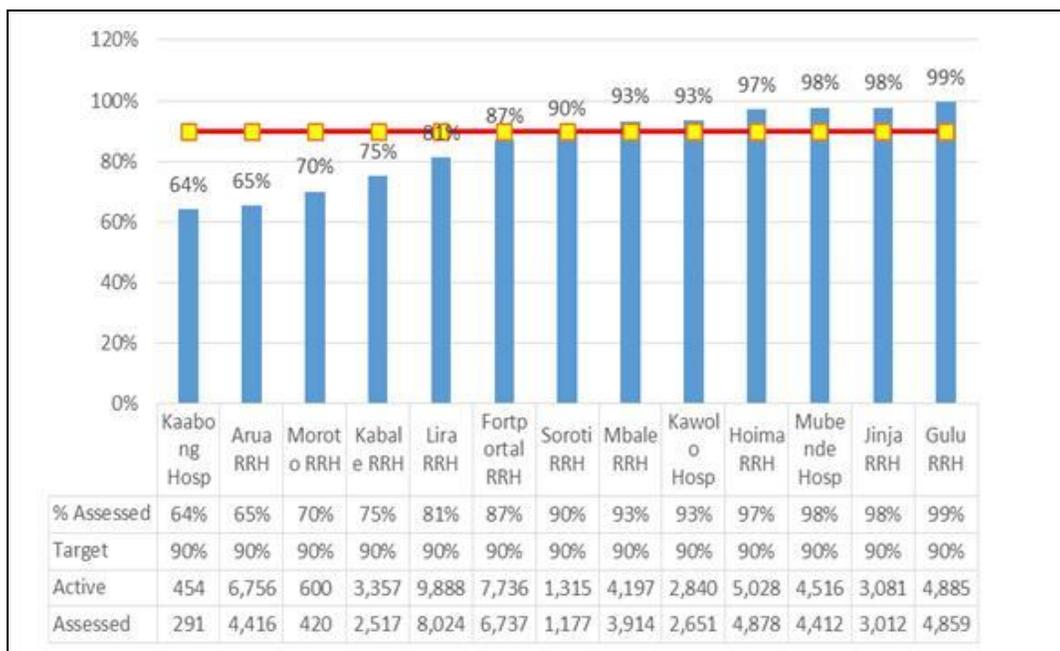
- *Healthcare service provider knowledge and skills strengthening* through training, mentorships and coaching on the national guidelines for integration of nutrition, particularly the NACS model.
- *Provision of basic equipment* such as Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) tapes, weighing scales, stadiometers for nutrition assessment, documentation and reporting tools and Information, Education and Communication materials (e.g., nutrition counselling cards and job aids) to facilitate provision of nutrition services within the healthcare facilities.
- *Partnerships with other implementing partners* to ensure healthcare facilities have adequate supplies of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) for management of clients with moderate and severe acute malnutrition. USAID/SUSTAIN is partnering with the USAID Production for Improved Nutrition (PIN) project to supply RUTF to supported healthcare facilities for management and treatment of severely malnourished clients.

### "The Seven Steps" Approach of Quality Improvement in Nutrition Care



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Proportion of HIV-infected clients assessed for their nutrition status using MUAC at 13 supported hospitals between July and September 2014



### Achievements and Progress

- RUTF supplies are available at eight out of eleven supported regional referral hospitals for managing clients with acute malnutrition. USAID/SUSTAIN provided training and regular mentorship and coaching sessions for healthcare providers involved in ordering nutrition supplies on correct quantification, documentation, reporting and submission of timely orders.
- At least 45% of malnourished clients (out of 86.6% clients assessed) were enrolled on RUTF to improve their nutritional status.
- Equipment to support nutritional assessment, including weighing scales and MUAC tapes, was procured and distributed by USAID/SUSTAIN to healthcare facilities.

### Quality improvement (QI) for Nutrition

USAID/SUSTAIN also supports integration of nutrition in ongoing quality improvement initiatives implemented at supported healthcare facilities. For example, all the 13 supported healthcare facilities have established nutrition QI teams to spearhead improvement changes. Some of the nutrition QI projects being implemented include:

- Improving nutrition assessment using MUAC method for HIV-infected clients and pregnant women attending the ART respectively
- Increasing the number of HIV-infected, malnourished clients receiving RUTF for management of their condition.

### QI Spotlight: Improving nutrition assessment for HIV-positive clients at Kawolo General Hospital (GH)

At the beginning of December 2013, the ART Clinic team at Kawolo GH noted that nutrition assessment for HIV-positive clients was at 73.2%; below the recommended target of 90%. The clinic's performance in this area was negatively affected by the lack of a clear client flow system, an indifferent attitude of some healthcare providers towards nutrition assessment and poor documentation of client assessment results.

USAID/SUSTAIN, working closely with the hospital leadership team at Kawolo Hospital, facilitated the clinic team to implement quality improvement projects to increase the percentage of ART clients assessed for malnutrition using MUAC. The following changes were implemented:

- MUAC tapes were provided to the triage nurse and clinicians to enable measurement of MUAC
- Clients' documents were screened to identify those who have not been assessed for malnutrition; clients lacking assessment records were provided the service
- Information on the importance of nutritional assessment was incorporated into health education talks to highlight for clients the benefits of knowing their nutritional status and create demand for the service at triage
- Weekly data review meetings were held to track progress

By September 2014, 99% of HIV-positive clients were assessed for nutrition status at each clinic visit at Kawolo Hospital ART Clinic.

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