



Amina Nasoni on her way to prepare dinner for her family after learning about the importance of the 5 different food groups in Mbeya. [Roshni Lodhia]

# Combating the Triple Burden of Malnutrition

## Leader in Nutrition




The promotion of human nutrition is a central pillar of Catholic Relief Services Tanzania and its fundamental role in health, growth and development is its driving force. In Tanzania, malnutrition, overweight, and obesity – have been an increasing concern at all government levels. According to the 2022 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey, 30% of children under-five are stunted with 9% severely stunted (undernutrition), 12% are underweight with 3% severely underweight, and 4% are classified as overweight. CRS aims to reduce this triple burden among vulnerable populations, particularly adolescents, pregnant, and lactating women, and young children. We focus on reducing the prevalence of stunting in children, improving adolescent, maternal, and early childhood nutritional outcomes, and strengthening nutrition services at community and facility levels. Working with our partners, CRS has made contributions to support the development of Tanzania's national guidelines by delivering comprehensive packages of health and nutrition services to the community, health facilities, and school.

## CRS Nutrition Programming

Specifically, CRS focuses on nutrition interventions on the following areas: 1) **Stunting Reduction**: addressing the multi-causal nature of malnutrition and stunting within vulnerable communities through multi-sectoral, integrated interventions; 2. **Health Systems Strengthening**:

strengthening the health systems in all governmental levels to deliver an integrated promotive, preventive, and curative service package to communities; 3) **Integrating Care and Child Development**: supporting key caregivers by building capacity for appropriate childhood development and positive parenting behavior to improve the impacts of nutrition and WASH programs.

Supported by studies and local contexts, CRS Tanzania adopts an integrated approach for our nutrition programming:

-  **Developing good governance** to reach national nutrition priorities through existing local government authorities' frameworks to build capacity and ownership of the different nutrition programs.
-  **Strengthening financial and human resources** to support the prioritization and funding of nutrition service delivery at the national and subnational levels.
-  **Building local and international partnerships** to expand our reach and enhance the impact of the CRS nutrition programs.

## Accelerating Stunting Reduction Project

Accelerating Stunting Reduction Project (ASRP) (2015-2021) reduced the occurrence of childhood stunting in the six districts in the Mbeya region. In partnership with UNICEF, The Center for Counselling, Nutrition and Health Care (COUNSENUTH), and the Tanzanian government, CRS offered group counselling sessions and the Village Health and

Nutrition Days (VHNDs) program to improve access to nutrition services for vulnerable households. By engaging a larger number of pregnant women and caregivers for young children in key nutrition-relevant behaviors through the Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) strategy and increasing the availability of diverse nutrient-rich foods and health services through the VHNDs, ASRP was able to reduce the prevalence of childhood stunting in the region from 37.7% in 2015/16 to 31.8% in 2021/22. ASRP contributed to Mbeya’s overall regional performance improvement, leading to its rise in regional ranking on nutrition compact indicators.

*“The rate of child stunting has reduced, childcare has improved, and community awareness has increased. All these were made possible by the implementation of Village Health and Nutrition Days.” - Benson Sanga, Mbeya Regional Nutrition Officer*

### Care for Child Development Project

Care for Child Development (CCD) (2018-2022) is a UNICEF-funded project aimed to train caregivers in appropriate early childhood development and positive parenting behaviors. CCD was implemented in the Mbeya region to complement the nutrition and WASH projects. 8,668 pregnant women and 34,542 mothers and caregivers (including paraprofessionals at pre-primary schools) were counselled by community healthcare workers (CHWs) during clinic and home visits and early childhood development (ECD) sessions conducted at pre-primary schools. CHWs included key messages on the role of parents and caregivers in child safeguarding, child stimulation, child protection and issue of birth registration.

*CCD established 670 mobile crèches and 71 permanent ECD spaces in communities where nutrition counselling sessions are organized.*



Caregivers feed their children following a cooking demonstration at a Village Health and Nutrition Day in Ngana village, Kyela district [Will Baxter]

### Community Led Total Nutrition

Community Led Total Nutrition (CLTN) (2021-2022) is a CRS-funded project in partnership with the Harvard University School of Public Health through an innovative approach of

community involvement for improving the health and nutrition status in communities. Implemented in 200 villages in the Kigoma region, it complemented the Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs) efforts of the Health System Strengthening Project. CLTN focused on social mobilization and behavioral change within communities to improve nutrition levels of children under the age of five years.

### Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition Outcomes Project

The Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition Outcomes (IMCN) Project (2021-2022) was a UNICEF-funded project aimed to improve maternal and child nutrition outcomes in the Mbeya Region.

*In the 7 Mbeya councils, IMCN was able to build the capacity of 2,000 frontline workers to improve the nutrition levels of 9,604 adolescents, 571,882 children under the age of 5 years and their respective caregivers, and 52,233 pregnant women.*

District Multisectoral Steering Committees for Nutrition and Council Health Management Teams in 7 councils were supported to become better equipped for planning, managing, and monitoring nutrition interventions at the facility and community levels. By designing a digitalized data collection system that generated low-cost quality and real-time data, IMCN was able to build the capacity of community-based frontline workers for improved services and interventions. With the project’s performance, the 7 Mbeya councils became more financially independent for their nutrition programs.

### Health System Strengthening Project

Funded by UNICEF, the Health System Strengthening Project (HSS) (2020 – Present) aims to strengthen the health system from the regional level down to the communities. Implemented in 8 Councils of the Kigoma Region with the involvement of the Regional Secretariat and LGAs, HSS trained 772

*Services enhanced by HSS reached 59,761 children under five years of age and 8,091 of their caregivers, 4,294 adolescents, and 2,426 pregnant women to date.*

community health workers to implement integrated promotive, preventive, and curative services to communities through the Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs) and new community-based health system (CBHS) for children, adolescents, and women of reproductive age.

### Moving Forward

For the coming years, CRS Tanzania’s Nutrition Programming looks forward to building multi-sectoral and standalone nutrition and ECD programming, collaborating with Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in community mobilization and data management to support national policies and guidelines in the years to come.