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Title: Walking the talk: How to translate multisectoral programming for stunting reduction into practice – Experiences from accelerating stunting reduction in under-two children in Rwanda

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A body of scientific evidence recognizes that reducing stunting requires delivering a holistic package of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions targeting pregnant and lactating women and children younger than two (i.e. within the first 1,000 days). However, few countries have managed to translate this approach into actual programs implemented at scale. Despite great achievements in reducing child mortality, chronic malnutrition (stunting) remains a challenge in Rwanda (38% of children younger than five). Since 2014, UNICEF Rwanda has been implementing a multisectoral program to reduce stunting in 18 out of 30 districts. Program interventions include growth promotion and cooking demonstrations including home fortification, behavior change communication activities, trainings and inputs for kitchen gardens and small livestock for improved diets, and providing access to micro-credits for income-generating activities to strengthen resilience. By linking these interventions, the program addresses the multiple bottlenecks that target households face in addressing child malnutrition. For example, implementing partners (IPs) indicate increased participation in growth monitoring when it is combined with cooking demonstrations, kitchen garden activities, etc. Moreover, as per the UNICEF conceptual model for malnutrition, the program addresses the different causal levels of child malnutrition for greater impact. Lessons learned include the necessity for an initial phase to coordinate and build relationships at local level and allowing IPs to decide on the 'how' to implement interventions according to their individual strengths while ensuring close collaboration with district counterparts. This necessitates flexibility in program design, however, it strengthens government ownership and accountability for improved impact and sustainability.