



Project Report on the District Leaders Nutrition Conference

Presented by: PLATFORM for the NEEDY (PLANE) Uganda

Date: 09th February 2026

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Introduction

The District Leaders Nutrition Conference, organized by PLATFORM for the NEEDY (PLANE) Uganda, took place on Monday 9th February, 2026 in the District chairman's boardroom, Kabarole District. This conference aimed to address the pressing issue of child malnutrition in the region, particularly as schools reopened for the first term. With the alarming rates of malnutrition affecting children's growth and academic performance, the conference brought together key stakeholders, including district leaders, nutrition activists, heads of departments, religious leaders, and community development officers, to discuss strategies for combating this crisis.

Acknowledgment of Support:

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Saachi Sood and her friends in India for their generous support in organizing a fundraising concert that contributed to the success of this conference. Saachi and her friends organized a music concert at one of the hotels in India and raised \$3000 to support this initiative.

Their commitment to fighting malnutrition and stunting among children in Uganda has been invaluable, and we are grateful for their partnership in this critical initiative.



A Section of Leaders pose for a group photo after the conference

Conference Overview

Objectives

The primary objectives of the District Leaders Nutrition Conference were to:

1. Raise awareness about the high rates of malnutrition in Kabarole District.

2. Engage parents, local leaders, district leadership and community members in the fight against child malnutrition.
3. Develop actionable resolutions to improve nutritional practices in schools and homes.
4. Strengthen collaboration among stakeholders to address malnutrition effectively.

Target audience /Attendance

The conference was attended by 40 invited participants, including district leaders, nutrition focal persons, heads of departments, community development officers, school head teaches and representatives from various organizations. The diverse participation underscored the collective commitment to addressing malnutrition in the region.

Achievements of PLANE

PLANE Executive Director Stephen Waddell gave the overview and achievements of the organization \. The organization has been actively involved in various initiatives aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable communities in Kabarole District. Some of our notable achievements include:

1. **Education for Vulnerable Children:** PLANE has provided education to 60 vulnerable children, ensuring they have access to quality learning opportunities. This initiative is crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering the next generation.
2. **Greening Uganda Schools Project:** In our campaign to promote environmental sustainability, PLANE has successfully planted 12,600 trees and fruit-bearing plants in 17 schools and communities. This project not only enhances the environment but also provides nutritional benefits to children and families.
3. **Gender-Based Violence Prevention:** PLANE has conducted radio talk shows and drama performances aimed at raising awareness and preventing gender-based violence (GBV) in the community.

These initiatives have been instrumental in educating the public about the importance of gender equality and the need to protect vulnerable populations.

4. **Support for Teenage Mothers:** In a bid to empower teenage mothers, PLANE has distributed goats to two groups of these young women. The groups include Nyakabira Young Mothers Group in North Division, Fort Portal Tourism City and Kimuhode Young Mothers and Women Group, Kiko Town Council, Kabarole district. This initiative will provide them with a source of income and sustenance, helping them to support themselves and their children.



Waddell Stephen Executive Director PLANE Uganda giving his presentation as District Health Educator looks on

Highlights of the District Nutrition Coordination Committee Chairperson at the District Leaders Nutrition Conference

- 1. Urgent Call to Action:** The Chairperson Kabarole District Nutrition Coordination Committee Mr. Brian Kisembo emphasized the critical issue of child malnutrition in Kabarole District, urging parents to ensure that children bring packed food to school. This initiative aims to combat the negative effects of attending school on an empty stomach, which contributes to stunted growth and hinders academic performance.
- 2. Alarming Malnutrition Statistics:** The Chairperson presented concerning data from the 2022 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS), revealing that:
 - **38.7%** of children under five in Tooro are stunted, placing the district third in the nation.
 - **14.4%** of these children experience severe stunting, significantly above the national average.
 - **11.3%** of children under five are underweight, with **3.2%** classified as severely underweight.
- 3. Root Causes of Malnutrition:** Kisembo highlighted that one contributing factor to malnutrition is parents selling food supplies, which leaves children without adequate meals. This underscores the need for community awareness and action.
- 4. Advocacy for School Feeding Programs:** The Chairperson advocated for the implementation of a school feeding program as a sustainable solution to malnutrition. By providing nutritious meals at school, the program aims to improve children's health and reduce dropout rates.
- 5. Nutritional Education:** The Chairperson stressed that nutrition goes beyond mere food consumption; it involves ensuring that children receive meals rich in essential nutrients. Currently, about **40%** of children in Tooro are not growing normally, with irreversible stunting occurring after the age of two.
- 6. Impact on Maternal Health:** The message also addressed the implications of malnutrition on pregnant mothers, linking it to

anemia and low birth weight, which can adversely affect child development and increase susceptibility to diseases.

7. **Community Engagement:** Mr.Kisembo noted the active involvement of nutrition committees across the district's 15 sub-counties, including Kabende, Hakibaale Harungogo, and Kasenda. These committees are working to engage families in promoting proper feeding practices.
8. **Call for Collective Action:** The Chairperson concluded with a rallying cry for the community to unite in nourishing children and securing a healthier future for Kabarole District.



The District Nutrition Chairperson Mr.Kisembo Brian addressing stakeholders about the status of malnutrition in the region

Achievements:

The conference yielded several significant achievements:

1. **Fruitful Discussions:** Participants engaged in meaningful discussions about the current state of child nutrition in Kabarole District. The exchange of ideas and experiences fostered a collaborative atmosphere for addressing malnutrition.
2. **Resolutions Made:** The conference resulted in several key resolutions aimed at tackling malnutrition:
 - Parents were urged to ensure that all learners return to school with packed lunches.
 - Families were encouraged to provide meals rich in essential nutrients to support children's growth and development.
 - Stakeholders agreed to strengthen sub-county nutrition committees and integrate nutrition into all government programs.
 - Mobilization of funding to support nutrition interventions was prioritized.
 - That PLANE and he partners in India will establish nutrition gardens in five schools as model schools and five households in the neighboring schools (leader famers). The experience will be cascaded to other schools.
 - Enhanced awareness creation through radio talks, drama, and community dialogues and parents meetings to spread the message about nutrition among children.



Leaders in the Nutrition Conference on Monday 9th February 2026

- 3. Collaborative Commitment:** The conference fostered a spirit of collaboration among district leaders, community development officers, and partners. Participants expressed a willingness to work together to implement the resolutions made during the conference.

Challenges Faced

Despite the successes of the conference, several challenges were encountered:

- 1. Time Constraints:** The conference was limited to a single day, which hindered in-depth discussions. Participants expressed a desire for a two-day event to allow for more comprehensive engagement but resources could not allow..
- 2. Absence of Key Supporters:** Our key supporters of the conference from India who were willing to participate did not make it. We're forced to organize it and do it without them. This limited the potential for deeper understanding of the problem, networking and collaboration.

3. **Divided Attention:** Several participants were simultaneously attending two separate meetings (senior management and the nutrition conference), which affected their concentration and engagement in discussions.
4. **Technical Difficulties:** An unexpected power outage disrupted the presentation of some of our work and projects, limiting the effectiveness of our visual aids.
5. **Transportation Facilitation:** Some members expected larger transport facilitation, which was not feasible within our budget constraints. This led to dissatisfaction among a few participants.
6. **Delay disbursement of funds:** The funds were on our GlobalGiving account on 11th November 2025. The funds reached on our Bank account on 23rd December 2025. It took a week to mature. This time was Christmas and New Year festive season in Uganda.
7. **Delayed implementation:** Although we had received the funds in December we could not implement because of the festive season. The month of January 2026 Uganda was carrying out general elections for presidents, members of parliament, district chairpersons and other district and lower level positions. There was a lot of campaigning and mobilization till 27th January. It was very difficult to organize the conference during this month because our target leaders and influencers were engaged in politics. This explains why it was organized early February.

Highlights of Kabarole District Chairperson Dr. Richard Rwabuhinga at the District Leaders Nutrition Conference

1. **Addressing Malnutrition:** Dr. Rwabuhinga Richard Kabarole District chairperson closed the conference by highlighting the urgent issue of malnutrition and its severe implications for children's futures. He emphasized that the current state of children's health is alarming, with an increase in lifestyle-related

illnesses, such as diabetes, stemming from poor dietary habits at home.

2. **Quantitative vs. Qualitative Growth:** The Chairperson poignantly stated, "People today are growing quantitatively but not qualitatively," underscoring the disparity between physical growth and nutritional quality. He linked inadequate nutrition to ongoing malnutrition and poor academic performance, stressing that hungry children struggle to think clearly, which stunts their growth and potential.
3. **Long-term Consequences of Stunted Growth:** Dr. Rwabuhinga warned that the effects of stunted growth extend beyond individual children, posing a threat to the well-being of future generations. He called for immediate action to address this crisis, highlighting the need for funding to support nutritional initiatives.
4. **Need for Dedicated Budget:** The Chairperson emphasized the necessity of a dedicated budget to combat malnutrition and its related issues. He pointed out the troubling correlation between cognitive impairments in stunted children and the rise in gender-based violence, indicating that malnutrition has far-reaching social implications.
5. **Commendation for Community Initiatives:** Dr. Rwabuhinga praised PLANE Uganda for their innovative advocacy programs, which utilize radio talk shows and drama to educate the community on health, social, and economic issues. He recognized these efforts as vital in raising awareness and promoting healthier lifestyles.
6. **Environmental Stewardship:** The Chairperson highlighted initiatives like the Greening Uganda Schools project, which not only addresses nutrition but also fosters environmental stewardship among the youth. This project aims to cultivate a generation that respects and protects nature, linking environmental health to community well-being.
7. **Call to Action:** Dr. Rwabuhinga concluded with a passionate call for collective commitment to nourish children and secure a brighter future for Kabarole District. He urged all stakeholders to

work together to address the pressing challenges of malnutrition and its consequences.



The Kabarole District chairman Dr.Rwabuhinga Richard addressing the stakeholders at the closure of the Leaders Nutrition Conference

Resolutions:

In light of the discussions and challenges faced, the following resolutions were agreed upon:

1. **Engagement of Parents:** A concerted effort will be made to engage parents in ensuring that all learners carry packed lunch to school, thereby addressing immediate nutritional needs.

2. **Nutritional Education:** Families will be sensitized on the importance of providing nutrient-rich meals to their children, emphasizing the long-term benefits of proper nutrition. This will be done by PLANE Uganda, district leaders and partners.
3. **Strengthening Nutrition Committees:** Sub-county nutrition committees will be empowered to take active roles in community sensitization and engagement on nutrition issues.
4. **Integration of Nutrition into Government Programs:** Nutrition will be integrated into all government programs to ensure a holistic approach to addressing malnutrition.
5. **Mobilization of Resources:** Stakeholders will work collaboratively to mobilize funding for nutrition interventions, ensuring sustainable support for initiatives aimed at combating malnutrition. District leaders highlight lack of funding and asked the development partners in nutrition to prioritize resource mobilization to support such initiatives.

Next Steps

Moving forward, PLATFORM for the NEEDY (PLANE) Uganda with support from Saachi Sood and friends in India will implement the resolutions made during the conference. Key actions include:

1. **School Feeding Program:** PLANE will initiate advocacy for a school feeding program in five identified schools: Kichwamba Kicwamba sub county, Kaboyo in Mugusu town council, Kinyakende in Mugusu Sub County, New Valley Junior in Kicwamba Sub County, and Hope Primary School in Busoro town council. This program will focus on educating parents about the importance of providing meals for their children at school.
2. **Nutrition School Gardens:** With support from Saachi and friends PLANE will establish nutrition school gardens will be a priority in the five mentioned schools. These gardens will serve as practical learning environments where children can grow nutrient-rich

crops, fostering a culture of healthy eating and self-sufficiency. The children can practice the same in their homes.

- 3. Community Engagement:** PLANE will engage with community members through workshops and sensitization campaigns to promote proper feeding practices and the importance of nutrition for child development. These are aimed aimed at changing mindset of the people about the nutrition.
- 4. Monitoring and Evaluation:** A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to assess the impact of the initiatives implemented and to make necessary adjustments for continuous improvement.



Stakeholders Pose for a Photo after the Nutrition Conference

Conclusion

The District Leaders Nutrition Conference was a significant step forward in addressing child malnutrition in Kabarole District. The collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, combined with the support of Saachi Sood and her friends, have laid the groundwork for meaningful change.

While challenges remain, the resolutions made during the conference provide a clear path forward.

PLATFORM for the NEEDY (PLANE) Uganda is committed to following through on these resolutions and working tirelessly to ensure that every child in Kabarole District has access to the nutrition they need to thrive. Together, we can create a healthier, more prosperous future for our children. Thank you once again for your invaluable support.

"Together for Tomorrow: Nourishing Our Children, Empowering Our Future!"