



ATONU
agriculture to nutrition

Agriculture to Nutrition (ATONU):

Improving Nutrition Outcomes Through Optimized Agricultural Investments

What is ATONU?

ATONU is a six-year project, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, focusing on how agriculture can deliver positive nutrition outcomes to smallholder farming families. It specifically targets women of child-bearing age and children in the first 1,000 days of life, the most nutritionally vulnerable. The project is being implemented in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Ghana/Uganda.

ATONU is designed to answer the question of what agriculture projects can do to achieve positive nutrition outcomes. Firstly, ATONU is developing frameworks and tools to design, pilot, rigorously evaluate and promote a range of agricultural interventions that will improve the nutrition of women and young children. Secondly, ATONU will provide technical assistance to existing and pipeline smallholder agricultural projects and programs that would like to improve nutrition outcomes but are not certain how to go about it. The ultimate objective is to ensure that policy makers and investors support agriculturalists to design and implement projects that deliver positive nutrition outcomes, reducing malnutrition in smallholder farm families.

33% of childhood deaths in sub-Saharan Africa are linked to under-nutrition.

Why ATONU?

The African continent has the highest malnutrition rates in the world, with 17 countries having stunting rates above 40% and 36 countries above 30%. Sub-Saharan Africa carries a high burden of under-nutrition, with 33% of childhood deaths linked to under-nutrition. Malnutrition is an underlying cause of nearly half of all deaths among children under five years of age in Africa and Asia. The largely irreversible effect of early childhood malnutrition on growth and cognitive functions impairs human productivity and could lead to a reduction of at least eight percent in a nation's economic advancement.

There is a disconnect between agriculture and nutrition. Traditionally, agricultural programmes have not intentionally focused on nutrition. Even in cases where agricultural investments have attempted to integrate nutrition, results are often not measured accurately, if at all. Other areas in which agriculture has failed nutrition include the following:

- Low levels of women's empowerment, resulting in an increase in maternal malnutrition and inability to practice positive child care behaviors;
- Insufficient investment and capacity to design, evaluate and advocate for effective agriculture-tailored nutrition interventions;
- Policy making is not well supported by research in terms of what works;
- There is lack of robust evidence as many questions remain unanswered about how best to integrate nutrition into agricultural investments under different contexts.



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Research Questions

ATONU seeks to answer the following key research questions along the agriculture value chain in its quest to ensure that agriculture delivers positive nutrition outcomes:

Primary production

What can soil fertility management, fertilizer use, germplasm (seed variety/ animal breeds), agrochemical use, agronomic and husbandry practices and harvest do for nutrition?

Post-harvest

How can product handling and processing (harvesting, processing, storage, food preparation, etc) contribute to nutrition?

Income

How do we ensure that increases in agricultural income lead to improved nutritional outcomes?

Gender and women's empowerment

How do gender dynamics and women's empowerment at household level affect decision-making on agricultural activities, income use and the nutrition of children, women and men in smallholder farm families?

Programme design

How can agricultural programs be designed to provide appropriate standards of credible evidence and improve nutritional outcomes within smallholder farm families?

Behavior change

How can best practices in nutrition and health be integrated into agricultural programs and projects to improve the nutritional status of women and young children?

Capacity development

How can multi-sectoral agriculture-nutrition decision makers, practitioners and policy advocates be equipped with knowledge, evidence and skills to support and advocate for the integration of agriculture and nutrition, and up-scaling of successful programs?

Delivery mechanism

How can agriculture and health help to effectively reduce hunger and malnutrition among women of child-bearing age and children?

ATONU's Theory of Change

ATONU will deliver the agriculture-nutrition outcomes through five pathways:

- (i) Food production for household consumption
- (ii) Income-oriented production for food, health and other non-food items
- (iii) Empowerment of women as agents
- (iv) Reduction in real food prices associated with increased production
- (v) Nutrition-sensitive agricultural growth

ATONU's seven consortium partners:

- Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN): South Africa
- Africa Innovations Institute (AfrII): Uganda
- Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA): Tanzania
- Natural Resources Institute (NRI): United Kingdom
- Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health (LCIRAH)/ London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM): United Kingdom
- Agribusiness Systems International (ASI): United States
- Farm Africa: United Kingdom

