

Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security Through District-Level Reform in Uganda

Policy Context

Uganda continues to face significant challenges in addressing malnutrition and household food insecurity, particularly at the subnational level where implementation gaps persist. While Uganda's Nutrition Action Plan II (UNAP II) (2020–2025) sets out a national vision for multisectoral response to malnutrition, translating this vision into coordinated, accountable action at the district level remains a key bottleneck. The CATalyzing Strengthened policy aCtion for heALTHY Diets and resilienceE project (CASCADe)¹, working in partnership with government and civil society, is supporting locally driven policy solutions to bridge this gap. A notable example is the development and adoption of the Nwoya District Food and Nutrition Security Ordinance (2024)—a landmark district-level policy that strengthens governance, accountability, and household-level practices for improved nutrition.

This brief documents the experience, lessons, and early results to inform donors and development partners seeking scalable approaches to nutrition policy implementation.

1 CASCADe (2022–2026) works to improve food security, reduce malnutrition, and strengthen resilience among women of reproductive age and children across Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda. Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and implemented by CARE Netherlands, CARE USA, and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the programme applies a food systems approach to support stronger nutrition policy implementation, promote multi-sectoral coordination, engage the private sector, and address structural and gender-related barriers to healthy diets.



Nwoya East Member of Parliament signing off the Ordinance

The Challenge: Persistent Gaps in Food and Nutrition Security

Despite national commitments, Nwoya District faces significant structural and behavioral challenges:²

- High household food insecurity: 45.7% of households experience food insecurity
- Malnutrition burden: Stunting (25.4%) and wasting (3.6%) remain high
- Agriculture dependence: 87.2% of households rely on agriculture
- Seasonal vulnerability: Frequent food shortages and distress sales during lean seasons
- Limited dietary diversity
- Women have limited decision-making power over food purchases
- Weak coordination: Existing platforms lack enforcement mechanisms and operational clarity

The Response: A District-Level Ordinance for Accountability

In December 2024, Uganda's Nwoya District passed the Food and Nutrition Security Ordinance, to address local challenges, improve multi-sectoral coordination among government and civil society partners, and strengthen governance efforts. It brings together agriculture, health, education, water, and local governance to ensure households can reliably produce and consume diverse and nutritious foods throughout the year. Key areas of focus include dietary quality, affordability, and diversity.

What Makes the Ordinance Transformative

The ordinance moves beyond guidance to enforceable action, introducing:

Strengthening household food security and practices

- Food processing and handling standards from production to consumption, including food safety and quality, loss reduction, and locally adapted, nutritious value chains
- Mandatory household reserves of diverse foods, to prepare for periods of scarcity
- Safeguards requiring mutual household consent for selling food reserves, protecting women's agency and support for the vulnerable
- Promotion of backyard gardens for year-round access to fruits and vegetables



A participant making a contribution during a council meeting for the ordinance

Institutional and governance support mechanisms

- Department obligations to support farmer access to finance and agricultural technologies
- A call for at least 10% of district and local budgets to fund agricultural and nutrition coordination

This ordinance represents a shift from fragmented interventions to a coordinated, accountable system anchored in local governance.

² Statistics: [Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2024 Final Census Report](#); [Global Nutrition Report](#)

CASCADE's Role

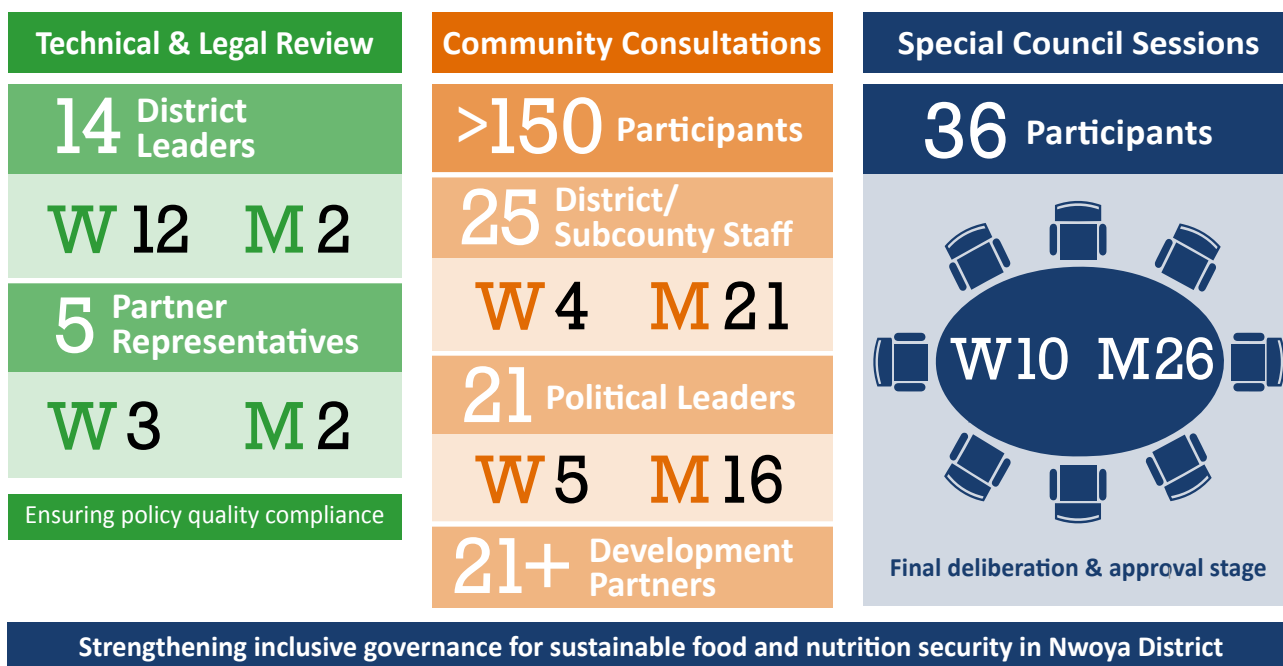
CASCADE played a catalytic, end-to-end role, from identifying systemic gaps to supporting inclusive policy adoption, ensuring that district-level reforms were evidence-based, participatory, and aligned with national frameworks.

- **Evidence of Gaps:** Using findings from the 2023 District Nutrition Coordination Council (DNCC) functional assessment, the project supported district leaders to recognize UNAP II implementation gaps at the local level.
- **Solution Design:** CASCADE supported district officials in mid-2024 to draft the Food and Nutrition Security Ordinance as a concrete response to the identified gaps.
- **Technical and Legal Alignment:** A consultant from the Office of the Prime Minister reviewed the draft ordinance and facilitated a technical and legal review to incorporate solutions that aligned with national laws and the Constitution.
- **Community Voice:** CASCADE facilitated 11 sub-county consultations in August 2024 to integrate community priorities and lived experiences into the draft ordinance.
- **Accountability Mobilization:** The project worked with women-led organizations and civil society organizations throughout 2024 to ensure inclusivity and strengthen citizen demand for enforcement of the ordinance by the district council.
- **Inclusive coalitions:** CASCADE coordinated with development partners, including national and local NGOs, women-led and rights-based organizations, disability and children's advocates, community development organizations, projects such as Right2Grow, media, and local cultural and religious leaders.

"The ordinance will address issues of food insecurity and malnutrition, which have been affecting children and even adults. ... We found it prudent to come up with a law to govern our community, how they eat, drink, and maintain the environment." – Tony Okello, Nwoya District Speaker

Nwoya District Food & Nutrition Security Ordinance

A multi-stakeholder journey toward improved food and nutrition security



From Adoption to Implementation: 2025 and Beyond

Following adoption, CASCADE shifted its efforts to **raising awareness of the ordinance** at the district and local levels through civil society, media, cultural and religious leaders, schools, extension staff, and other development partners. **Technical assistance** continues, for planning, budgeting, and monitoring, as well as advocacy for increased budgets for nutrition.

In 2025, key activities included:

- **Development of ordinance regulations:** CASCADE co-convened a workshop to develop implementing regulations, defining roles, enforcement mechanisms, and compliance standards across district departments.
- **Integrated district nutrition workplan:** A district-wide work plan was developed, with partners aligning budgets and technical inputs to support coordinated implementation.
- **Budget alignment (FY26/27)** The district budget conference aligned departmental priorities and partner investments to operationalize the Food and Nutrition Security Ordinance.
- **Awareness creation and rollout:** Mobilizing communities, civil society, religious bodies, and cultural institutions to engage in the policy process and roll-out; and
- **Tracking implementation and capturing learning** in UNAP III and Uganda's new National Development Plan IV (2025/26–2029/30).

Early Results: Strengthening Systems and Mobilizing Resources

Results from 2025 already suggest progress in the right direction:

- **Development of ordinance regulations:** Project monitoring shows that 75% of DNCCs are now fully functional – with district and sub-county nutrition committees demonstrating **stronger joint planning, coordination, and evidence-driven budget commitments** in CASCADE target districts.
- **Resource mobilization:** By integrating **13 partners' activities** into one district plan, Nwoya attracted additional funding for food security programming. Still, resource constraints and capacity gaps remain, requiring continued awareness raising, coordination, capacity strengthening, and advocacy for increased national and local investment.



Yusuf Akubonabona, the Nwoya District Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Chairperson of the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC), addresses district leadership during the review of the draft ordinance at the Nwoya District Headquarters

In Practice: The Significance for Households, Women, and Children

The ordinance is expected to benefit 100,800 food-insecure households, with provisions to safeguard household food stocks, expand access to inputs, and ensure that all household members – including women and people with disabilities – are included in food-related decisions.

Communities in Nwoya, with support from CASCADE, are already bringing components of the ordinance to life across the project. Key highlights include:



100,800 households

Expected to benefit from improved food and nutrition security protections and support.



Farmers Trained

2,946 farmers trained
(**2,242** women
and **704** men)

Training covered:

- Crop diversification
- Climate-resilient agriculture
- Food safety and storage
- Value addition



Learning Sites Promoting Nutrition

36 active learning sites
in Nwoya District

These sites promote:

- Home gardens
- Diverse crops
- Nutrient-dense foods
- Crops for home consumption and sale

Featured crops:

- Dark leafy greens
- Orange-fleshed sweet potato
- Iron-rich beans



Household Skills Through FFBS

Farmer Field and Business Schools (FFBS) are helping households strengthen:

- Dietary diversity
- Food storage and preservation
- Nutrient-dense recipes
- Household budgeting
- Shared decision making

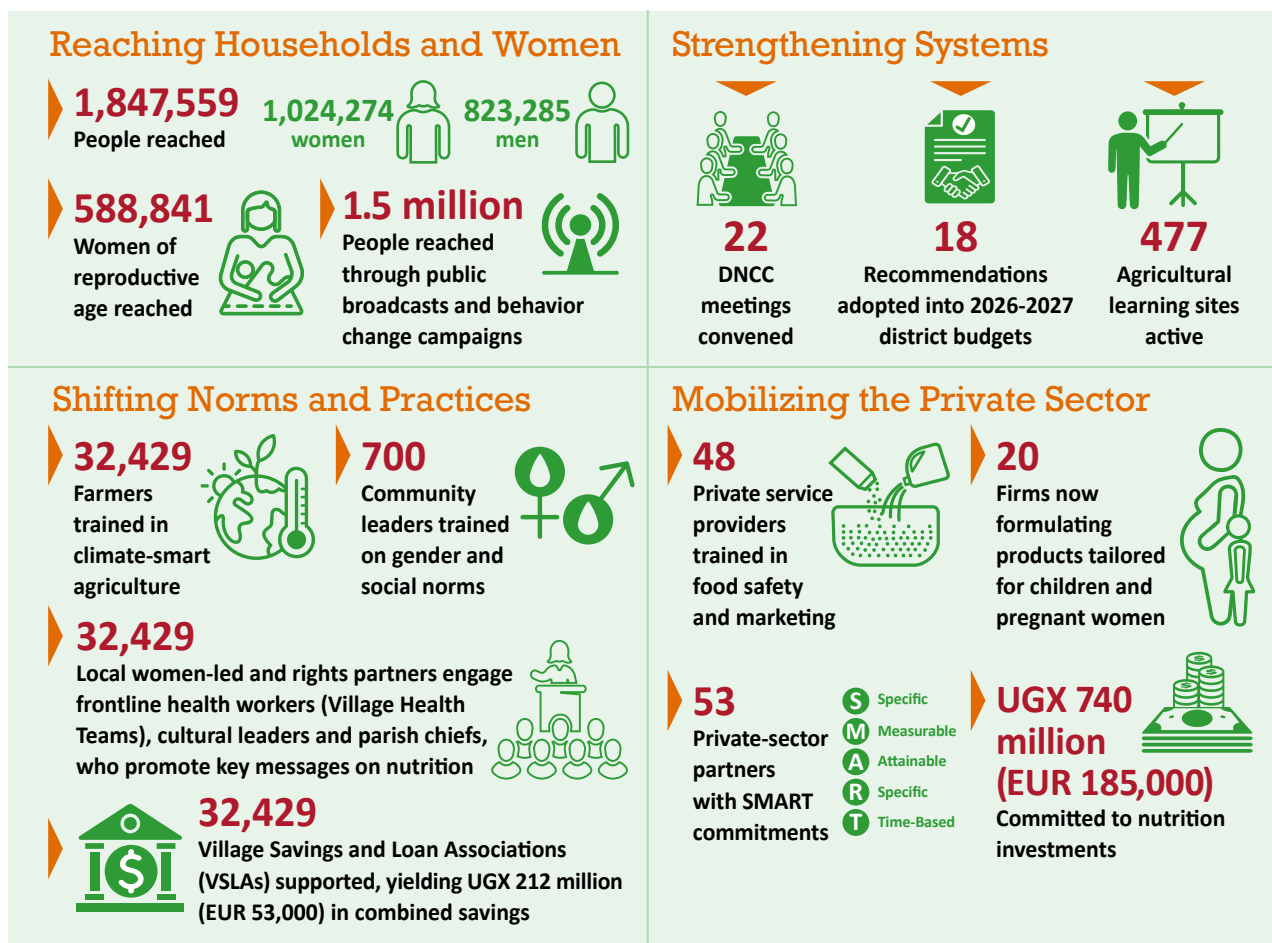


Stronger Local Planning

Community Score Card committees, leaders, and government stakeholders are working together to:

- Improve district planning
- Identify service gaps
- Highlight staffing and supply needs in health and agriculture

CASCADE Uganda in Numbers: 2025 Results



Why This Matters: A Scalable Model for Uganda

The Nwoya experience demonstrates that locally driven, legally backed policy reform can accelerate progress on Uganda's national nutrition priorities. By translating multisector policy commitments into enforceable district-level action, the Food and Nutrition Security Ordinance shows how gaps between national strategy and local implementation can be closed in practice. With the right technical support and government ownership, this approach can be replicated across other districts, strengthening implementation of future national frameworks – including **Uganda's National Development Plan IV** (2025/26–2029/30) – while improving coordination, accountability, and alignment of resources at scale. Most importantly, the model delivers **measurable, community-level benefits**, ensuring that national nutrition goals result in tangible improvements for vulnerable households, women, and children.

Conclusion: Investing in What Works

CASCADE's work in Nwoya shows that bridging the gap between national policy and local implementation is both possible and impactful. By combining evidence-driven advocacy, inclusive policy design, strong government ownership, and sustained technical support, district-level reform can deliver lasting improvements in food and nutrition security. Continued investment will be essential to scale this model, strengthen systems, and ensure that national nutrition goals translate into real outcomes for communities across Uganda.



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