



NiPN
National Information
Platforms for Nutrition

How to formulate questions: from policy demand to an answerable question

Perrine Geniez, Global Support Facility (GSF)

NIPN Technical Gathering, Paris, 3-5 July 2018



Going from broad policy demand to answerable questions

Objective of the session is to understand the process to narrow down broad policy demand to an answerable question

→ By answerable question, we mean a question that responds to a relevant policy need, provide timely output & is answerable given the data, methods & the capacities available

- It is not a linear process
- It builds upon experience of the National Evaluation Platforms (NEP) project
- It has to be experienced/done to be understood

Going from broad policy demand to answerable questions

1. Knowing the broad policy demand: what do decision makers need to know?
2. Getting into relevant policy questions: setting-up your priorities
3. From relevant questions to answerable questions:
 1. The use of 'mapping models' or 'impact pathways'
 2. Examples from countries
4. Getting to answerable questions: additional parameters to consider



1- Understanding broad policy demand

Knowing your country's situation by understanding:

- What decision need to made?
- By whom the decision will be made?
- When will decision need to be made?
- Where (at which administrative level)?
- How is the decision made & what does that mean for communicating evidence/findings?





Understanding the policy & programs framework

- What are the key multisectoral and sector-specific nutrition policies & programs?
 - All SUN countries have a Multisectoral Plan of Action being implemented but those are at different ‘levels of maturity’
- What is the implementation cycle of these policies & programs?
- What is the financing (budget/expenditure) cycle?
 - when, how much & for what programme/plan
- What is the main administrative level of focus
 - Federal/central, regional or sub-national administrative level





Understanding the policy actors

- Who are the actors?
Institutions/individuals
- Are there existing coordination fora?
- Are they functional?
- Who are the key people of influence?
- Are they related to the platform?





From broad demand to relevant policy questions

- Consider which questions are common across sectors or which ones are sector-specific but high priority:
 - All sectors want to know what progress are made on achieving the MPA's stunting reduction target OR one sector want to know about its specific contribution to these targets.
- The demand needs to be turned into question(s)!
 - Is this a question to you?
 - ➔ *“We would like to use & analyze together intervention progress indicators, expenditures data & outcome data”*

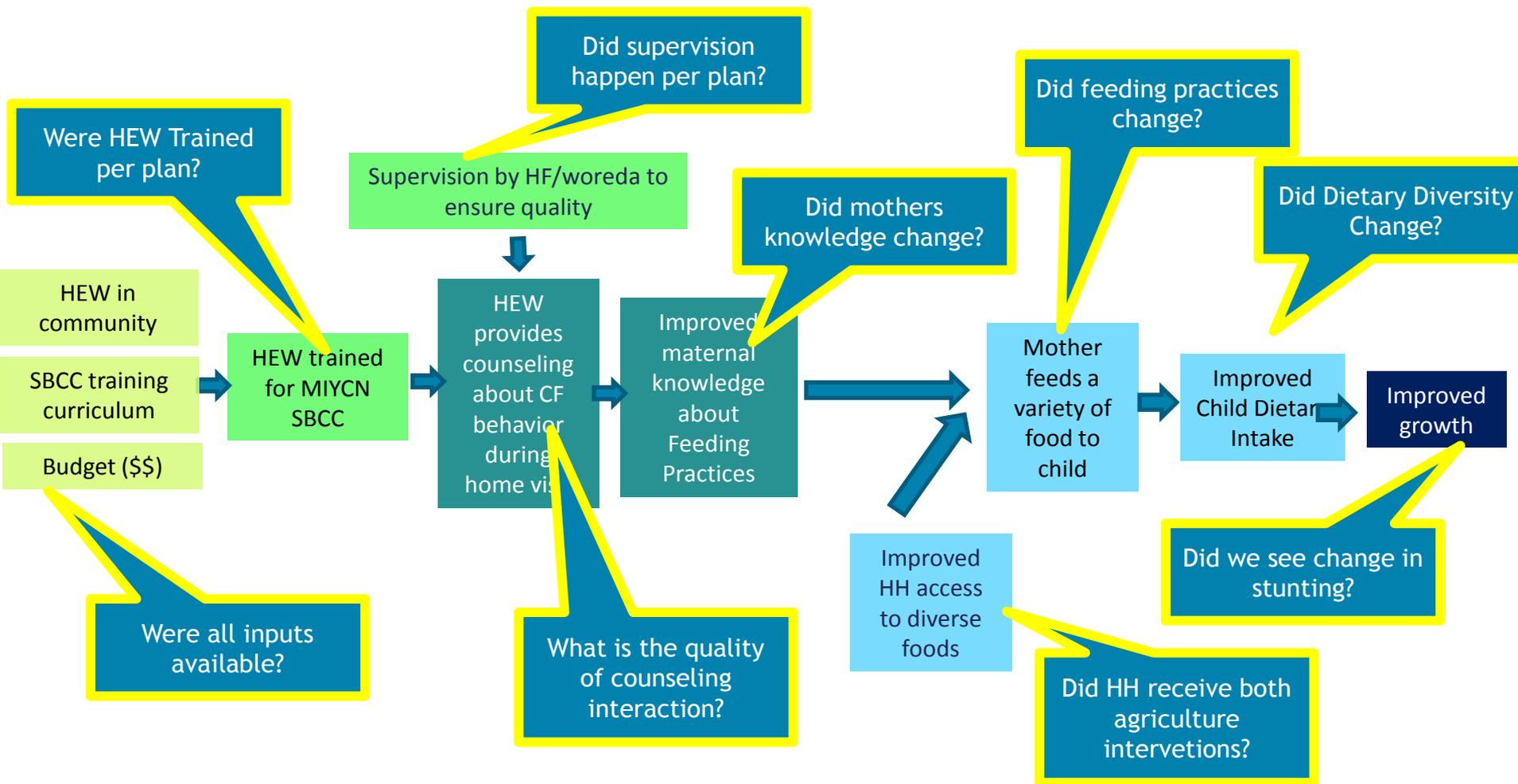


How “impact pathways” / “mapping models” can help in the process?

- Many names used for the same basic concept
 - e.g. conceptual framework, impact pathway, theory of change...etc
- Best way to prioritize relevant question & start developing answerable question(s) BECAUSE:
 - it helps specify elements & relationships to consider
 - it creates a picture for any level
 - it allows to map data you need vs. have

Example of policy relevant question:

MOH launched a new nutrition counseling intervention through CHW in two regions. After 3 years of implementation, they want to know whether it should be scaled up nationally in the next 5-year strategy.



This is a possible impact pathway

*Material from 'Sekota Evaluation' done by Johns Hopkins University (JHU) in Ethiopia. Credit JHU



1st example: Guatemala

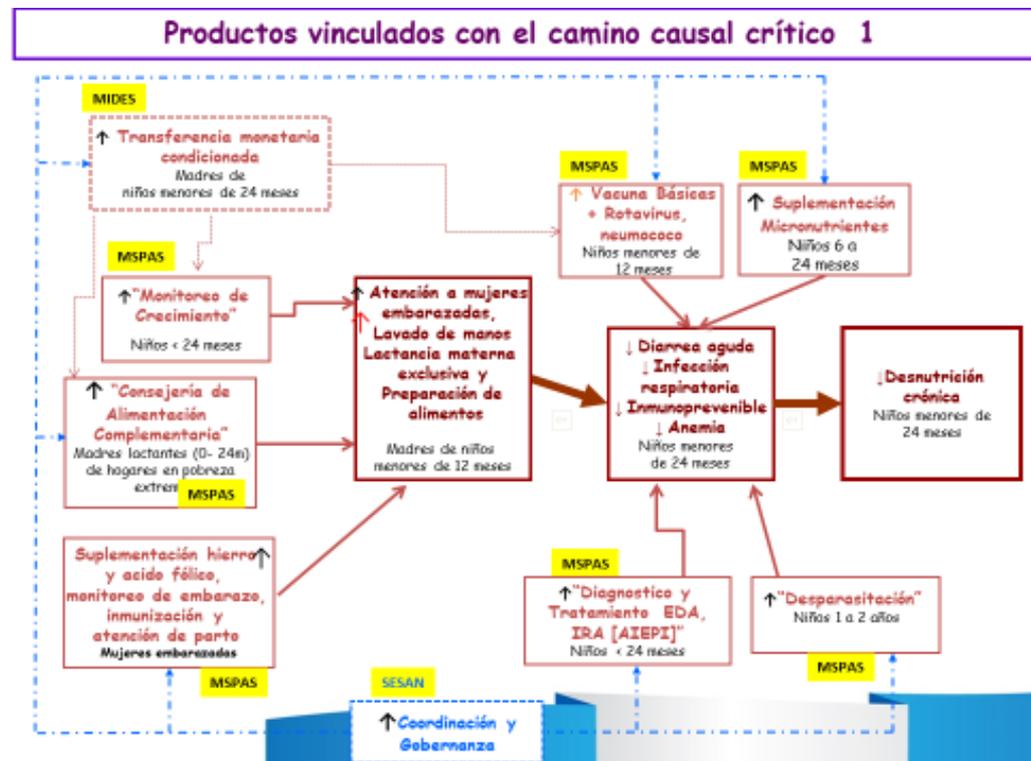
- A new national strategy to prevent chronic malnutrition: “ENPDC”
- 2016-2020 (mid-term)
- It refocus on:
 - a) Geographical coverage
 - b) A comprehensive intervention packages
 - c) Fewer responsible institutions
- As part of the design, ‘causal pathways’ were conceived





What are we learning from existing 'causal pathway'?

- Initial mapping of possible data owner / data source
- Possibly lack some 'intermediary' outcomes?
- Interventions (ENPDC) = assumptions made
- **Still need to further unpacked**





Guatemala: potential questions

→ What decisions need to be made at this stage?

– Target setting

- Given changes in the last 5-10 years, what level of intervention coverage do we expect in the next 5-10 years? What should sub-national targets be?
- Do we see differences by geographic areas? With targeted department or outside?

– Mid-strategy review

- If we are 5 years into 10 year plan:
 - Do we see changes in stunting, dietary intake, HH food security?
 - How has coverage of each sector-specific intervention(s) changed at household level / child level over the last 2 to 3 years?
 - How the sectoral ‘budget allocation’ has changed over the last 2 to 3 years?
 - Do ‘budget allocation’ and intervention coverage follow the same trends over time?
 - If we don’t see expected changes in intervention coverage, why not?
 - » Were expected inputs in place? (Staffing? Training? Supply chain? Budget?)

*What are our data needs: Do we have data on intervention coverage across sectors?
At what frequency? What geographic/sub-group levels?*





2nd example: Mali NEP

CONTEXT: “Plan décennal de développement sanitaire et social (PDDSS) 2014-2023 »

- Not common nor harmonized targets for mortality reduction
- Lack of harmonization among sectoral plans
- Intervention package to reach the mortality reduction targets not entirely though through

SO, initial policy demand was around:

- Cohesion and harmonization around one common national target for mortality reduction

→ NEP started working in 2012 in Mali: the plan was in the making/ formulation phase

@ Credit, National Evaluation Platform (NEP) of Mali



NEP Cycle 1 – Evaluation question 1

How many lives would be saved if Mali were to reach the targets in its strategies and plans?

1. Which interventions will have the most impact ?
2. What would be the reduction in the maternal mortality ratio?
3. What would be the reduction in the neonatal mortality rate?
4. What would be the reduction in the infant and child mortality rates?
5. What would be the impact on nutrition in Mali?

Mali priority questions:

NEP Cycle 1 – Evaluation question 2

What interventions should be implemented and what coverage levels should be targeted to allow Mali to reach PDDSS/PRODESS mortality targets by 2023 in the area of:

1. Neonatal mortality
2. Infant mortality
3. Under five mortality
4. Maternal mortality ratio



A relevant policy question can still be in or out of NIPN scope

- Analysis will use existing quantitative data
→ no new data collection, beside qualitative
- Questions that requires a specific design set-up and/or new data collection:
Eg: impact or cost-effectiveness/efficiency questions





What is required to formulate answerable questions

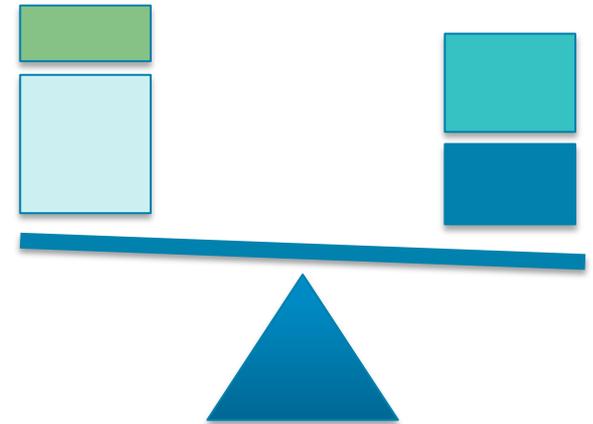
- At this stage, you need work to hand by hand your data analysts
- Additional parameters they will bring into the process:
 - Do we have the data?
 - Are the data available?
 - Are they accessible?
 - Are they of adequate quality for the analysis to be conducted?

→ It is a *back and forth / iterative process*



Recap on important elements leading to an answerable question

- Individual & cross-sector policy cycles & priorities
- Relevance vis a vis a policy demand
- Availability of & access to data, & quality
- Technical expertise/capacities of NIPN team



→ *It is better to be explicit about competing priorities & do background work*



Conclusion

- It is all about **dialogue & communication**
- It is a very **iterative process**
- It is more about ‘**soft skills**’ than technical ones

Plus remember that we must meet decision makers deadlines!!!

We have a board meeting coming up and could use a little input from the evaluation team.



Sorry, we're not scheduled to provide input until year 3.

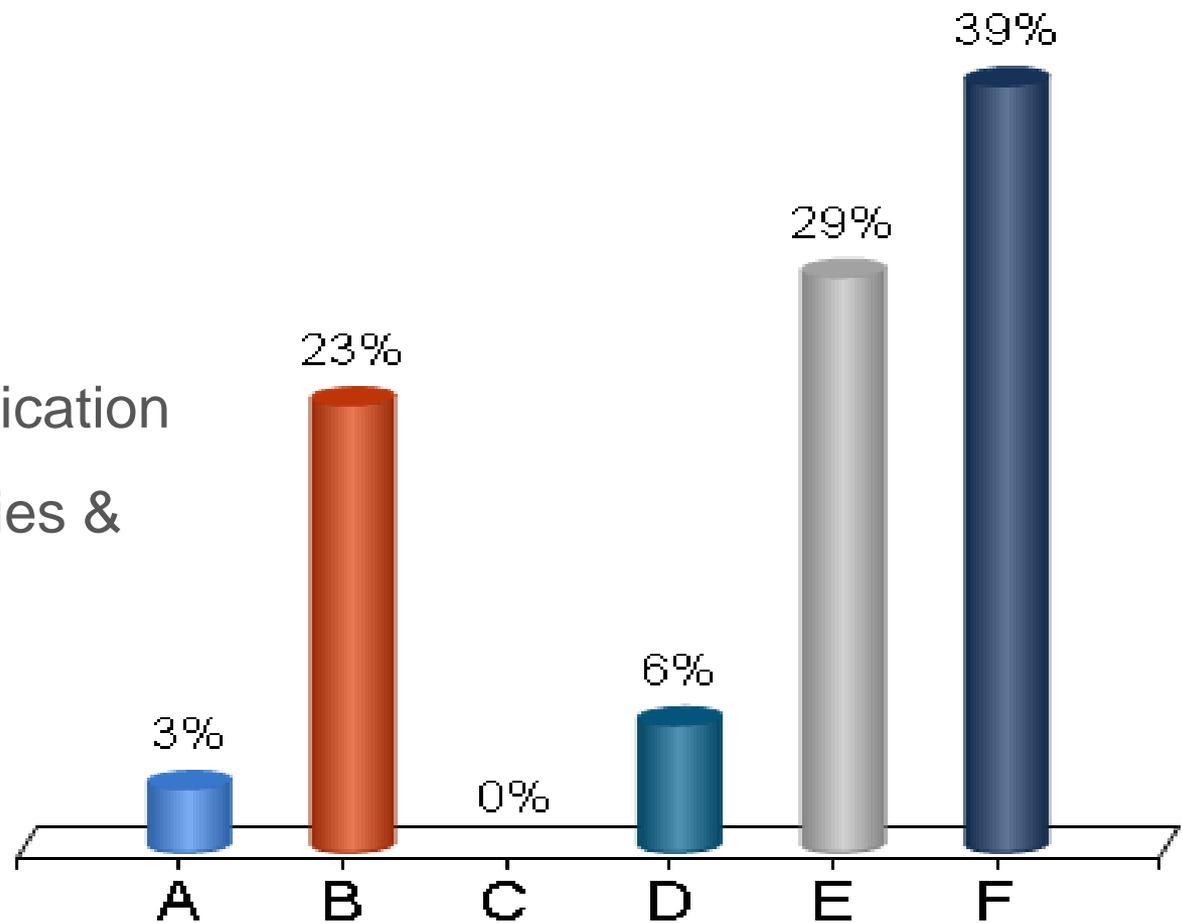


freshspectrum.com

Now, what do you think formulating questions is about?



- A. The data
- B. The data quality
- C. Technical skills
- D. Soft skills
- E. Dialogue & communication
- F. Understanding policies & programmes





NiPN

National Information
Platforms for Nutrition

**Merci - Thanks -
gracias!**

**Questions - questions -
preguntas?**

Special thanks to Rebecca Heidkamp,
John Hopkins University (JHU) & to the
National Evaluation Platform (NEP) Mali
in supporting this presentation

