

Report



NiPN
National Information
Platforms for Nutrition

1st NIPN Technical Gathering

Paris, France – July 3-5, 2018

Meeting report – August 20, 2018
NIPN Global Support Facility



Executive summary

This three-day Global Technical Gathering of the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) was extremely valuable. It allowed all 10 participating countries to feel part of a whole, created a common understanding of NIPN, enabled discussion of technical matters, implementation needs, opportunities and bottlenecks, and encouraged collaboration and sharing across countries. It allowed the NIPN Global Support Facility (GSF) to identify the most urgent needs for technical support in the coming year.

On the first day, the focus was on the common understanding of NIPN before listening to the excellent presentations of Niger and Guatemala. These two countries really set the tone; they didn't hide their difficulties but instead presented their progress as well as their challenges. Key takeaways from their presentations were:

- The importance of the highest level of political support and multi-sectoral engagement. In Guatemala this is at the presidency level and even enforced by law.
- The Niger web portal (featuring both open and restricted access areas) which helps create visibility for NIPN, and enables the sharing of findings and collection of policy questions.

The second day allowed for a deep dive into two important topics: 1) the formulation of nutrition policy questions and how to make sure they are relevant and answerable, and 2) the power of NIPN data analysis which lies in simple descriptive analyses. NIPN is not meant to answer questions around causality and impact, which require a research set-up to control for confounding factors and implausible relationships.

This was followed by 4 parallel working groups where participants prioritized on one of the following:

1. Data landscape exercise
2. Setting up a Multi-Sectoral Advisory Committee
3. Developing a capacity building plan
4. How NIPN supports working across sectors

A speed dating carousel session allowed all participants to develop an appetite for more on a few technical tools, such as the use of a data dashboard, the use of LIST¹ or AARR², monitoring of financial investments by the SUN³ movement and the development of a Data Aggregator.

The third and final day identified the urgent need for a cross-country knowledge management and learning approach. GSF will start monitoring progress and challenges in all 10 NIPN countries in order to document and disseminate lessons learned.

Finally each country team took the results of all the group work they'd done to compile a 6-month roadmap for an action plan to take home.

This 1st Global Technical Gathering was valuable and many concrete action points for our way of working as well as priorities have been identified. We have identified which guidance briefs or tools GSF should co-create with countries and experts in order to support the countries in the implementation of NIPN, including a dashboard template based on a minimum set of indicators. We need to focus on building credibility for NIPN in the 10 countries.

A [short video](#) provides a good summary of the meeting.

¹ LIST: Lives-Saved Tool

² AARR: Annual Average Reduction Rate

³ SUN : Scaling Up Nutrition

Meeting interactive agenda

Also available at: <http://www.nipn-nutrition-platforms.org/1st-NIPN-Technical-Gathering-Presentations>

Tuesday, July, 3 rd		
OPENING SESSION		
09.00-09.20	Welcome addresses	Carla Da Silva Sorneta, European Commission Rahul Rawat, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Marti Van Liere, NIPN-Global Support Facility
09.20-10.00	Participants' introduction	facilitated by Jane Badham, JB Consultancy
10.00-11.00	The core purpose of the NIPN initiative	by Marti Van Liere
SESSION 1: COUNTRIES EXPERIENCE AND VISION		
11.30-12.15	NIPN experience from Niger	by Issiak Balarabé Mahamane Institut National des Statistiques
12.15-13.00	NIPN experience from Guatemala	by Juan Carlos Carias Estrada, SESAN Otto Velásquez, SESAN Laura Figueroa, Ministerio de Salud Eduardo Say Chavez, CATIE
14.00-15.40	Country teams working groups “NIPN implementation phase”	
16.10-16.50	Discussing a NIPN theory of change	by Alta Folscher MOKORO - NIPN evaluation team
16.50-17.00	Wrap-up day 1	by Jane Badham

Wednesday, July, 4 th		
09.00-09.15	Introduction day 2	by Jane Badham
SESSION 2: HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ANSWER A NUTRITION POLICY QUESTION?		
09.15-10.00	Process to formulate a nutrition policy question	by Perrine Geniez NIPN-Global Support Facility
10.00-11.00	Country teams working groups “Identification of a nutrition policy question” - part I	
11.30-12.30	Strengths and boundaries of NIPN to answer a nutrition policy question - Presentation - Video	by Jef Leroy IFPRI
12.30-13.00	Country teams working groups “Identification of a nutrition policy question” - part II	

SESSION 3: TECHNICAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

14.00-15.15	Parallel workshops:	
A. Conducting a data landscape		facilitated by Guillaume Poirel NIPN technical advisor, Niger and Julien Chalimbaud NIPN-Global Support Facility
B. Constituting a multisectoral NIPN advisory committee		facilitated by Sandra Recinos NIPN Technical advisor, Guatemala and Perrine Geniez
C. Elements for a NIPN capacity building strategy		facilitated by Anne Bossuyt NIPN technical advisor, Ethiopia and Marti Van Liere
D. How does NIPN support working across sectors?		facilitated by Ann Tarini NIPN technical advisor, Burkina Faso and Lola Gostelow , Consultant
15.45-17.00	Tools & methods carousel	
A. Tracking progress in nutrition outcomes: the AARR indicator - Presentation - Video		by Julien Chalimbaud
B. Tracking progress in financial nutrition investments - Presentation - Video		by William Knechtel , SUN Movement Secretariat
C. Sub-national nutrition profiles: the example of POSHAN - Presentation - Video		by Jef Leroy
D. Modeling impact of interventions on stunting: the LiST “Lives-saved tool” - Presentation - Video		by Jillian Waid , HKI Bangladesh
E. Aggregating data from multiple sources: the GSF “data aggregator tool” - Presentation - Video		by Milko Skofic , NIPN-Global Support Facility
17.00-17.15	Wrap-up day 2	by Jane Badham

Thursday, July, 5th

09.00-09.15	Introduction day 3	by Jane Badham
SESSION 4: COUNTRIES ROADMAP		
09.15-10.15	Knowledge management & learning across countries	by Marti Van Liere
10.45-12.30	Country teams working groups “Roadmap for action”	Bangladesh (poster/video) - Burkina Faso (poster/video) - Côte d’Ivoire (poster/video) - Ethiopia (poster/video) - Guatemala (poster/video) - Kenya (poster/video) - Laos (poster/video) - Niger (poster/video) - Uganda (poster/video) - Zambia (poster/video)
13.30-15.30	Understanding and sharing countries NIPN’s roadmap for action	
CLOSING SESSION		
16.00-17.00	Synthesis and conclusions Closing remarks	Marti Van Liere Abigail Perry , UK Department for International Development

Background

The National Information Platforms for Nutrition or ‘NIPN’ is a flagship programme funded by the European Commission, the UK Department for International Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It is part of the Nutrition Action Plan of the European Union which comprises two major commitments: reduce by 7 million the number of stunted children by 2025, and invest €3,5B in nutrition-specific and sensitive programmes.

NIPN's purpose is to analyse data and provide evidence to inform nutrition policies, decisions, investments and programmes in 10 countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kenya, Laos, Niger, Uganda and Zambia.

Despite the diversity in country contexts, NIPN aims at the following common results:

1. Create country-led and -owned multi-sectoral national information platforms for nutrition
2. Manage and analyse information and data from all sectors which influence nutrition
3. Disseminate and use information that informs strategic policy and programme decisions on nutrition

Our policy framework is a 3-step process:

1. **Questions:** raising and formulating nutrition policy questions - how do we prioritise, what is within the scope of NIPN and what is outside it?
2. **Analysis:** compile existing information to answer these questions, analyse data and interpret results
3. **Findings:** feed findings into the nutrition policy dialogue

The NIPN policy framework



Informing nutrition policies is not just about hard data: it is also about the soft skills of collaboration across sectors, and communication between areas of expertise.

Meeting objectives

The meeting aimed to encourage and share learning across the 10 NIPN countries as they move from set-up to implementation, shifting ownership to country level (NIPN's ultimate driving force). For every NIPN country to progress in a similar direction, the role of GSF will be to ensure quality control and common country outputs, which will allow for comparison. The national level technical assistance is there to support individual country-specific issues so GSF can direct attention and resources to ensuring common principles are followed and common guidance is provided, and that lessons are learned and shared across countries.

Meeting objectives:

- Share a common vision of NIPN and understand the commonalities and differences of our 10 NIPN countries
- Discuss technical matters related to NIPN set-up and implementation
- Discuss implementation needs, opportunities and bottlenecks
- Better understand the needs/priorities for GSF and technical assistance at national level
- Strengthen collaboration within and across countries
- Share experiences, learn from others and start building interactions between countries for future exchanges
- Facilitate the work of the Mid-Term Review



Altogether, 67 participants from the 10 NIPN countries and partners at global level attended the meeting.

The list of participants is provided in **appendix A**.

A photo gallery of the event is available [here](#).

Session 1: Countries experience and vision

NIPN experience from Niger and Guatemala (presentations: [Niger](#) - [Guatemala](#))

Niger and Guatemala presented their experiences in setting up the NIPN process, the challenges encountered and how they overcame them, and their first steps in implementing the NIPN cycle. The presentations were followed by lively discussion.

Commonalities: Both countries have an existing multi-sectoral approach to nutrition, including a supra-body mandated to coordinate and lead multi-sectoral nutrition reporting to the Presidency. NIPN benefits from high level visibility as the supra-body in charge of multi-sectoral nutrition plays a direct role in project implementation (HC3N⁴ in Niger and SESAN⁵ in Guatemala). Both have installed a Multi-Sectoral Advisory Committee integrated into the existing multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms for nutrition.

⁴ HC3N: Haut Commissariat à l'initiative 3N : « Les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens »

⁵ SESAN: Secretaria de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional

The institutions which are in charge of the strategic leadership in multi-sectoral nutrition, technical execution and technical assistance, have clear roles and responsibilities. Ministries contributing to the multi-sectoral nutrition plan have been engaged in various consultations which has created visibility and credibility for NIPN. Both countries are relatively data rich, though issues of accessibility and quality may vary greatly, and both have an existing centralised data system to build upon.

During the inception phase, both countries developed a number of assessment protocols, tools and training modules that can be adapted to other countries.

Differences: Guatemala has a long-standing and robust legal basis for multi-sectoral collaboration in food security and nutrition, yet they face challenges implementing and tracking nutrition interventions under the Government's priority 'Strategy for Preventing Chronic Malnutrition'. Also specific to Guatemala is a well-functioning financial investment monitoring system which tracks desegregated financial commitments and expenditure of the interventions planned under the strategy.

Niger has developed a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan of Action and has recently re-structured its coordination mechanisms. Strengthening and upgrading sectoral information systems remains a challenge but the Statistics Institute of Niger has the legitimacy to coordinate the national information system. Niger has chosen to create a digital visual platform for NIPN outputs - revamping the existing DEVINFO platform - to ensure increased transparency and support multi-sectoral dialogue.

KEY MESSAGES

Elements of success in setting up the NIPN in Niger:

1. There must be consensus on the platform's objectives and added value
2. A high level of political engagement is necessary
3. A motivated country team with efficient collaboration between the national institutions in charge of political/strategy lead
4. Set and defined responsibilities for all actors and sectors
5. Coherence between the responsibilities of the main grant and the technical assistance
6. A realistic and consensual roadmap and availability of resources

From the GUATEMALA presentation:

1. Guatemala has a robust legal framework and long term policies related to food security and nutrition in place since 2005 as well as strong governance mechanisms
2. A recent National Strategy for the Prevention of Chronic Malnutrition (*Estrategia Nacional de Prevencion de la Desnutricion Cronica* - ENDPC 2016-2020) comprises interventions across health, food access and availability, water and sanitation, and social protection
3. The different line ministries (agriculture, health, social development) involved in the implementation of the ENDPC strategy are coordinated by the Food and Nutrition Security Secretariat (SESAN)
4. A system to monitor financial investments and expenditure has been in place for 5+ years, enabling cost effectiveness analysis of the interventions. The government's priority for a 'unified information system' to track the ENDPC implementation has offered a strategic niche for NIPN
5. CATIE provides project management and technical assistance for policy support and data analysis.

A more detailed account of both presentations can be found in **appendix B**.

Following the presentations of Niger and Guatemala, each country drew up and detailed how they saw the operationalisation of the NIPN process including roles, first steps, actors, links to their policy cycles, the strategic niche of NIPN, and bottlenecks and opportunities.

Discussing a NIPN theory of change [\(presentation\)](#)

A mid-term review of the NIPN, covering the entire initiative from global level activities to country projects, is currently being carried out by Mokoro Ltd, a UK-based consultancy. The methodology was presented.

KEY MESSAGES

1. The Mid-term Review is a formative mini-evaluation of the full NIPN initiative. It will look at progress made through 31 May 2018 to provide recommendations, and will be completed by the end of September.
2. It takes a country case study approach.
3. It is being undertaken as a theory of change evaluation. The review team will map out how the initiative intends to achieve change, clarifying the expected causal links between inputs, outputs and outcomes, and the assumptions about why they will materialise. It pays specific attention to the intermediate results that are needed. The materialisation of results can then be tested and performance explained.
4. Theories of change can also be used for strategic planning purposes.

Objectives:

- Evaluate progress against the four results NIPN expects:
 - R1-Create the capacity within national institutions to operate and maintain NIPN
 - R2-Make progress on monitoring nutrition
 - R3-Translate NIPN finding into nutrition related policies
 - R4-GSF is effectively established and providing technical support and as an effective global dialogue
- Look at results for the whole initiative related to the support provided by GSF
- Provide actionable recommendations for technical assistance given by GSF during implementation
- Evaluate risks and mitigation measures for risks that have been taken so far and those that have been made explicit within the programme or initiative
- Propose a grid for evaluating progress in country ownership and on engagement of all stakeholders

Approach and methodology:

- This is a formative evaluation, i.e., it looks at what happened in the past to assist what happens in the future.
- To tell how well the programme has functioned, the following criteria will be used: relevance at country and global level, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability of inputs and results, and coherence of the initiative (is it consistent internally and with other complimentary programmes and initiatives?).
- A theory of change will be developed to assess, review and formulate recommendations for the future. It sets out a detailed cause and effect chain: inputs and outputs, objectives and outcomes, and the impact the programme will have in the world in terms of growth.

Research and data collection:

A three tier case study approach is being taken. Countries were selected for each tier based on a mix of conditions, progress made, process, and institutional set ups. For the first tier, country visits will be combined with in-depth interviews (Bangladesh and Guatemala). The second tier will involve lighter case studies with group discussions and document reviews (Cote D'Ivoire, Kenya, Niger and Uganda). The third tier is an even lighter review of progress made (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Laos and Zambia).

The NIPN theory of change is presented in **appendix C**.

Session 2: How to identify and answer a nutrition policy question?

From policy demand to an answerable question [\(presentation\)](#)

KEY MESSAGES

1. Formulating policy relevant and answerable questions is a process that needs to be experienced and guided/facilitated.
2. It is not linear but iterative as it requires going through different loops.
3. This presentation offers a starting point to outline the main process steps.
4. The process can broadly be described as:
 - a. Understanding and capturing broad policy demand in nutrition
 - b. Making and communicating strategic priorities regarding what policy demand can be addressed within NIPN
 - c. Turning the broad policy demand into relevant policy questions...
 - d. ...And then into answerable questions
5. Going from step 2 to 4 can be facilitated by using impact pathways or models.
6. Going from step 3 to 4 requires hand-in-hand collaboration between the policy officers from multi-sectoral supra-body coordination institutions and ministries, and the data/statistician specialists because the formulation of an answerable question needs to be rooted into the reality of the data availability, accessibility and quality as well as NIPN capacities.
7. The process requires continuous communication on choices made to ensure that policy makers are aware of what NIPN will and won't be doing, why and by when. The process ultimately should support multi-sectoral policy dialogue.

In many countries, e.g. Niger and Guatemala, data reports are being prepared by statisticians and researchers. It is often a one-directional approach, lacking dialogue about the interpretation of the findings which might raise new questions to be researched.

The NIPN process aims to create a two-directional approach in which data analysts and policy-makers work together to define the answerable questions that respond to a broad policy demand.

This is a key step in the NIPN cycle. There are no benchmarks. Over the next few months GSF proposes co-creating a tool with a few NIPN countries that outlines the steps and do's and don'ts of this process, and then rolling out the process in regional workshops. Some steps are more challenging than others and may need to be facilitated. The process will become easier and will need to be adapted to country-context by experiencing it.

Outline of steps:

- Knowing the broad policy demand: what do decision-makers need to know?
- Getting into relevant policy questions: setting up your priorities within the platform's objectives
- From relevant questions to answerable questions: what is feasible within your objective:
 - The use of mapping models or impact pathways - how can they help
 - Illustrating the process with examples from Guatemala and Mali
- Getting to an answerable question from a relevant question: additional parameters to consider

We recommend starting from what exists already (e.g. REACH stakeholders and action mapping in nutrition) and doing a policy and process review and stakeholder mapping. Broad and obvious questions need to be answered. It is equally important to know the channels of communication to decision-makers. Some people have more influence than others, some may have the attention of influencers.

Understanding broad policy demand:

- What decision needs to be made?
- Who will make it? When and where?
- How will it be made and what does that mean for communicating evidence/findings? This is the ultimate phase of NIPN. What is powerful enough to get the message across?

Understanding the policy and programmes framework:

- What are the key multi-sectoral and sector-specific nutrition policies and programmes?
- What is the implementation cycle of these policies and programmes: are they being evaluated, formulated or implemented? Are new programmes being designed?
- What is the financing cycle (this is key to decision-makers)?
- What is the main administrative level of focus (national or decentralised)?

Understanding the policy actors:

- Who are the actors: institutions/individuals?
- Are there existing functional coordination fora?
- Who are the key influencers?
- Are they related to the platform?

From broad demand to relevant policy questions:

- Consider which questions are common across sectors and which are sector-specific but still high priority
- The demand needs to be turned into question(s)! Often policy makers do not express their needs as questions - it takes experience to turn down or reformulate the expressed demand into a question
- Deciding on a relevant policy question comes down to making strategic choices

How impact pathways or mapping models can help the process:

A mapping tool is the best way to prioritise relevant questions and start developing answerable question(s) because it:

- Helps you formulate the actual questions not only about the elements but also about the relationships to consider
- Creates a picture of the different elements and their relationships and presents them in a structured and logical manner
- Allows you to map data you need vs. data you have, as well as sources

What is required to formulate answerable questions?

- A word of caution: a relevant policy question is not always answerable within the scope of NIPN. This is discussed in more detail in the next section.
- At this stage, policy people need to work hand in hand with data analysts.
- Additional parameters they will bring into the process:
 - Are the data available and accessible?
 - Are they of adequate quality for the analysis to be conducted?
- The capacities of NIPN need also to be considered when deciding on answerable questions.

Conclusions:

- Communication over the process and decision made by the NIPN team needs to be maintained throughout with the policy makers.
- Dialogue is key to success as is timing because production of analysis outputs need to match policy makers' decision timeframes.

This session was followed by country group work to start defining nutrition policy questions.

Strengths and boundaries of NIPN to answer a nutrition policy question [\(presentation - video\)](#)

KEY MESSAGES

1. Simple and clear analyses can have a big impact on policy makers; descriptive statistics can tell a powerful story
2. Impact or causal analyses are outside the scope of NIPN as survey data do not take into account the confounding factors

If you measure something and you show it and you get attention, it's impossible for policy makers to ignore it.

Simple and clear analyses can have a big impact on policy makers!

- No need to conduct complicated analyses
- But... what is done must be done correctly
- This is where NIPN can (and should) make a difference

Simple doesn't mean quick and dirty - you have to do it right. A shaky analysis and conclusion can kill the credibility of the entire initiative.

To illustrate the power of descriptive statistics, two examples were presented. In Mexico the government changed their social assistant programme targeting after a simple analysis showed that most benefits went to middle income households instead of lower income households. In India mapping district level data demonstrated that despite a high proportion of registrations for antenatal care, very few women made regular visits and even fewer took the folic acid supplements distributed.

Impact or causal analyses are outside the scope of NIPN (e.g. did the new policy reduce stunting?)

- There is no need to re-demonstrate what has been well studied by international research - one can summarise the results from meta-analyses and apply these to the country context.
- Causal inference requires a controlled research setting for comparison, measurement and analysis of the impact of possible confounding factors
- It is very likely that analyses based on survey data will lead to the wrong conclusion as there has been no control for confounding factors.

Policy makers and data analysts alike are programmed to jump to the big causal questions, and would like to know the impact of their investments. However NIPN analyses which are making use of survey data cannot relate to causal questions therefore NIPN teams need to be cautious about associations and causal analysis.

This point was illustrated amongst others with the following example: if the sun rises every morning after you've made your coffee, this shows a perfect association but it is not plausible to conclude there is a causality between these two events because other factors explain both events independently.

Policy makers will always ask questions related to impact of programmes in order to make investment decisions. It is therefore important to break the high-level unanswerable impact questions down into answerable questions that focus on the intermediate steps of the impact pathway regarding coverage, implementation quality, uptake of interventions by beneficiaries or consumers.

Following this session, the countries went back to the nutrition policy questions they had formulated during the earlier group work and revised them based on the advice to focus on descriptive analysis, and not on causal relationships.

Examples

Examples of answerable and unanswerable questions which were formulated during this exercise are presented in the table below. GSF will develop a tool regarding the do's and don'ts of data analysis for the country teams, which will be rolled out in regional workshops early 2019.

Questions that are RELEVANT for policy makers AND ANSWERABLE by NIPN platforms (pending data availability):

- What is the geographical distribution of obesity and its increase?
- Based on international evidence on the pathways (WASH/nutrition), do the right people (population, age, geography) get the right set of WASH interventions?
- How has stunting prevalence evolved at sub-national level over the last five years?
- What is the level of coverage and quality of nutrition counseling and other infant & young child feeding interventions?
- Which counties have had the greatest increase in the population of stunted children under 5 years?

Questions that are RELEVANT for policy makers but are likely to be UNANSWERABLE by NIPN platforms:

- What is the impact of investments on stunting reduction?
- Are the strategies implemented to address micronutrient deficiencies sufficiently efficient in addressing the needs of the people?
- What was the cost-efficiency of the implementation of the minimum set of interventions in priority areas?
- How to prioritise funding to reduce the prevalence of stunting through: (a) social protection, (b) communication, (c) education and (d) emergency programmes.

Session 3: Technical challenges and solutions

Parallel workshops

Four breakaway sessions discussing technical matters related to NIPN implementation were organised to identify country demand for specific support from GSF, as summarised below.

A. Data landscape

Objectives:

1. Discuss technical matters related to NIPN implementation:
 - Understanding how to conduct a data landscape analysis
 - Identify common challenges and common solutions
2. Identify country demand for specific support from GSF

Data landscapes have already been carried out in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Laos, Niger and Zambia.

Key learnings:

- Developing a comprehensive list of nutrition indicators is critical for NIPN
- Consider existing demand for data and start with those indicators
- Focus on improving existing nutrition data systems in terms of responding to policy questions
- Prioritise data to be used for some upcoming important events (opportunities)

Greatest challenges:

- Potentially lots of indicators of interest, so difficult to identify and map them all
- Weak administrative data sources
- Requirements to report at sub-national levels may be hard to achieve
- Geographical/administrative sub-divisions within countries can change over time
- It's a challenge for policy makers to select the indicators to prioritise for decision-making
- Data quality assessment
- Filling up data gaps identified by policy demands
- Develop the inactive dashboard platform where data would be easy to use
- Mapping out the needs of indicators to measure the nutrition improvements and identify a gap
- Working more on metadata elements using internal metadata platform

B. How to form a Multi-Sectoral Advisory Committee

Objectives:

1. Discuss, learn and exchange about the constitution of the NIPN Multi-Sectoral Advisory Committee
2. Identify key features/principles for its constitution

Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guatemala and Zambia were present and discussed opportunities and challenges in their respective contexts. Guatemala presented its experience in setting up the committee, as did Ethiopia which is in the process of establishing.

Key learnings:

- Guatemala prioritised the development of an integrated system to track chronic malnutrition - this coincided with the start of the NIPN programme. The commission tasked to lead this merged with the NIPN committee which was institutionalised by law, integrated as part of multi-sectoral nutrition coordination. This ensures national ownership and sustainability.
- Burkina Faso and Bangladesh reported challenges with multi-sectoral coordination led by the Ministry of Health in both countries. It is newly established in Burkina Faso and not yet acknowledged by other sectors. In Bangladesh it has only recently been revived; additional mapping of other multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms is recommended.
- Ethiopia's multi-sectoral coordination has been active for several years under Ministry of Health leadership, which co-chairs the decision-making and technical/programming coordination levels with the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Like Ethiopia, Zambia has a National Food and Nutrition Commission within the Ministry of Health, recognised as coordinator of sectors across Ministries.
- The constitution of the NIPN Multi-Sectoral Advisory Committee might act as a stimulator to strengthen government multi-sectoral coordination structure.
- The structure and function need to be high-level with preparation done by the smaller NIPN team so that meetings can focus on guiding, endorsing and validating.
- It is important to define the advisory committee's functions to inform capacity and number and composition of members.

Likely functions of the committee as discussed by the group:

- Help to capture and understand broad policy demand across sectors
- Advise on strategic priorities for policy questions
- Present and endorse results from analysis/NIPN outputs
- Formulation and communication of analysis findings upward
- Ensure a shared understanding of NIPN priorities and timing to produce analysis/outputs
- Facilitate access to sectoral data and other data
- Overall key relay between policy makers and analysis unit/technical execution, guiding, advising, endorsing and validating

Greatest challenges:

- Some thought the committee should be high level with authority to make decisions, others that to ensure actively and regular engagement it should be constituted at mid-programming officer's level and include people with access to decision-makers.
- Obtaining the necessary commitment to NIPN at a high level.
- Making the committee sustainable beyond the project and deciding functions likely to be sustained (Guatemala example is inspiring).
- Getting participation, interest and active engagement from sectors.
- For Bangladesh and Burkina Faso multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms face operational issues, making the constitution a challenge.
- Deciding which structure to strengthen to avoid duplication and support multi-sectoral efforts.

C. Capacity building strategy

Objectives:

1. Understand which elements to take into account when developing a NIPN capacity building plan
2. Identify common challenges (requiring common solutions) and those that are country-specific

There are four key elements that are common to all NIPN, and for which we believe different sets of capacity are important and need to be reflected in the strategy: policy question; data management and data analysis; interpretation of results and formulation of findings, and; communicate and disseminate findings for policy use.

It is also important to define: direct and indirect beneficiaries, type of skills, baseline/endline and the means of capacity development including format, budget and human resources to build capacity.

Ethiopia presented their plans for a gap analysis, which takes into consideration:

- A needs-based and targeted approach to assess technical needs per research topic.
- Collaborative research and mentoring to be used as an instrument to develop individual capacity.
- Thematic workshops, short seminars or group training, or e-learning will be used to strengthen institutional capacity.
- Global connections, such as through Compact2025, or GSF success stories of other countries, will fuel the exploration of new ideas and innovations.

Key learnings:

- Each country needs to analyse the gaps in capacity and prepare a (validated) plan that ensures sustainability
- GSF will provide global support by developing common guidance for each step in the NIPN cycle which could become an e-tool
- Broad country-specific capacity building needs are in data analysis, report writing and policy communication
- Basic capacity development of junior/mid-level officials (e.g. data management, data analysis, nutrition)
- The local technical assistance can take up focus on country-specific needs which are not addressed by GSF focus on common tools for the NIPN cycle
- GSF might facilitate by identifying high quality international courses for various topics
- Short-term consultants can also support and guide the country NIPN team in the implementation of NIPN activities

Greatest challenges:

- When government changes, staff change at public institutions and this is a problem for sustainable capacity development
- Coordination through Multi-Sectoral Advisory Committee
- Sustainability issue - to develop the system by which data from other organisations will be sent regularly
- To find an appropriate trainer and get sufficient budget support
- Institutional constraints in giving NIPN independence on capacity building
- Multi-sectoral and stakeholder turnover - a lot of different societies and institutions

D. How NIPN supports working across sectors

Objectives:

1. To help countries get multi-sectoral participation underway
2. To aid understanding that nutrition needs a multi-sectoral approach not only because there is no ministry for it but also because it touches on so many sectors and can only improve if all are involved

By using existing structures at different levels, NIPN is able to bridge policy concerns with technical capacity and helps to reinforce and strengthen existing information systems across sectors to make them more timely, fill gaps, and improve their use. NIPN also encourages government commitment to collect and use data. NIPN shows all sectors that nutrition is in their mandate and should be their concern and this is in line with the fact that nutrition is an indicator of development so it should be a key concern of government.

A multi-sectoral approach aids political understanding that existing sectoral information systems need to become more joined up. Because it works across sectors and ministries, NIPN creates a common understanding of nutrition and unites everyone behind a concrete focus which leads to action. It helps sectors that don't see nutrition as a central concern to better understand their role and contribution and take joint ownership. Sharing results and/or making them public motivates action in all sectors.

In Niger's experience NIPN helps each sector understand what it can do for nutrition: its not business as usual, something needs to change, e.g., targeting, indicators, etc. It improves accountability and builds data capacity of each sector to strengthen systems.

Key learnings:

- NIPN is the platform that will bring several sectors together to share information
- NIPN is helpful for reinforcing/strengthening the existing information system across sectors
- What can we be learning from other multisectoral issues (e.g. climate)
- All country understanding that undernutrition is a multisectoral problem and needs assistance to improve the multisectoral analysis to the decision-making policy level
- Understanding role among sectors to improve nutrition status
- NIPN will promote ownership and interest from stakeholders on data and policy direction

Greatest challenges:

- Facilitating data sharing and flows across ministries
- The key challenge may come from the flow of data from lower level to the point of analysis
- Need to improve availability and use of data in nutrition-sensitive sectors
- NIPN might not answer all policy questions therefore some supplementary studies and evidence are needed
- Some of the institutions do not have information systems in place
- Main challenge: NIPN is an only project with a limited time; the main challenges are larger than the project duration

Tools & methods carousel

Five different tools/methods were shown in short, repeated presentations in different languages to allow every participant to attend at least 3 presentations. A brief overview of the main advantages and limitations of each tool is provided below.

A. AARR (Annual Average Reduction Rate) ([presentation](#) – [video](#))

Advantages:

- The AARR can help answer questions such as :
- What is the current trend of stunting reduction?
- Is it sufficient to reach targets of the national nutrition plan of action?
- The AARR is widely used to track progress on nutrition indicators

Limitations:

- You need to determine carefully the 5 parameters of the model before calculating the AARR.
- It can theoretically be calculated at sub-national level but, in practice, the data available are not precise enough and confidence intervals around the AARR are typically very wide and not useful for policy makers.

B. Financial Tracking ([presentation](#) – [video](#))

Advantages:

- There are different methodologies to track investment/expenditure
- Budget analysis serves coordination and policy dialogue. It helps mobilise additional funding for multi-sectoral action plans or re-balances existing funding.
- It is an important advocacy tool and is key to accountability
- Country investment snapshots are available for most SUN countries

Limitations:

- One of the challenges remains in the tracking of nutrition sensitive investment/expenditure

C. POSHAN dashboard ([presentation](#) – [video](#))

Advantages:

- Includes nutrition indicators and immediate underlying or basic determinants such as dietary diversity, coverage of interventions, women empowerment
- Easy to read and understand

Limitations:

- Encouraging policy dialogue requires additional steps, the dashboard alone does not suffice

D. LiST ([presentation](#) – [video](#))

Advantages:

- LiST can help answer questions such as:
- If all interventions included in LiST are scaled-up to achieve 90% coverage, what will be the estimated number of stunted children averted and which interventions would have the greatest impact?
- If the coverage of zinc supplements is scaled up to x% over the next 5 years, what will be the likely impact on the prevalence of stunted children?
- LiST is relatively user-friendly software prepopulated with national data. Results and lessons learnt are well documented.

Limitations:

- It is important to understand what is not included. LiST includes interventions for which there is strong scientific evidence of impact and therefore includes mainly nutrition specific interventions.
- It is important to understand and, if necessary, contextualise the default parameters of the model. In particular, the effectiveness of interventions can be context specific.

E. Data aggregator ([presentation](#) – [video](#))

Advantages:

- Can aggregate and search variables (harmonised) from different datasets
- Can generate a well-documented central repository

Limitations:

- Not yet fully operational

Session 4: Countries roadmap

Knowledge management & learning across countries ([presentation](#))

This session aimed to discuss how NIPN and GSF can facilitate cross-country learning and create a greater coherence in the NIPN approach across countries.

This requires a structured and systematic knowledge management approach that allows for the analysis of country information and captures the challenges encountered and the lessons learned in overcoming them. As part of its mandate to coordinate NIPN globally and learn what works and what doesn't, GSF aims to develop such an approach in close collaboration with NIPN country structures and their Delegations of the European Union, in order to obtain regular progress reports from each NIPN in the least invasive way.

A lively discussion was triggered in which certain countries expressed their concern about an additional reporting burden, others said it would facilitate their annual reporting to the Delegation of the European Union, and some that their current progress monitoring might be used to respond to the needs of GSF.

Country group work permitted the teams to reflect on the progress indicators which could be reported on, who should be responsible for the reporting to GSF, and which outputs or tools they would value to capture the lessons learned.

The next step is for GSF to develop a short template for quarterly country progress monitoring based on the NIPN logical framework. After validation with a number of countries in August, we would like to pilot its implementation starting in September.

Country teams would be asked to fill in the template on the basis of their own monitoring approach, followed by a quarterly call with GSF team to discuss progress, challenges and bottlenecks, and the need for support. These reports can be shared with the Delegations of the European Union and used in the preparation of the annual report. Guatemala shared their Excel formatted monitoring file based on a traffic light system to identify priorities.

Based on inputs, GSF will identify common challenges, best practices, specific country solutions or tools, and organise cross-country sharing through webinars, country case studies and the NIPN website resource centre.

Countries NIPN's roadmap for action

As a final output of the 3-day meeting, all country teams created a roadmap for the following 6 months which addressed these four questions:

1. What are your priorities in the coming 6 months for NIPN?
2. One thing your country must achieve in the short term, i.e., 2-3 months.
3. One thing your country must achieve in the medium term, i.e., 4-6 months.
4. One support you need; who do you need to provide that support?

The outputs poster presentations of this exercise have been photographed and video-recorded and can be accessed through the hyperlinks:

■ Bangladesh	Poster Video	■ Kenya	Poster Video
■ Burkina Faso	Poster Video	■ Laos	Poster Video
■ Côte d'Ivoire	Poster Video	■ Niger	Poster Video
■ Ethiopia	Poster Video	■ Uganda	Poster Video
■ Guatemala	Poster Video	■ Zambia	Poster Video

Next steps

This three-day Global Technical Gathering of the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) was extremely valuable. It allowed all the 60+ participants from the 10 NIPN countries to feel part of a whole, created a common understanding of NIPN, enabled discussion of technical matters, implementation needs, opportunities and bottlenecks, and encouraged collaboration and sharing across countries. It allowed the NIPN Global Support Facility (GSF) to identify the most urgent needs for technical support in the coming year.

The most telling statistics in the [final evaluation](#) were that 77% of the participants felt their country NIPNs had been strengthened by the gathering, the same number believed the gathering had helped their teams to progress, and 90% went away feeling that they now know what the next steps are in their countries. Concluding remarks from individual countries are provided in **appendix D**.

Following this intensive three-day meeting, a number of action points have been agreed by the participants.

Based on inputs received from countries, GSF will:

- Revise its work plan by end of July 2018
- Define which priority tools are to be developed (co-created) with countries and experts of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG), August-November 2018
- Develop a country progress monitoring approach and tool and start rolling this out in September 2018
- Have follow-up calls with countries to discuss their 6-month action plans
- Roll-out tools and build capacity in various steps of the NIPN process, October 2018-March 2019.

The NIPN country teams will:

- Fine-tune their 6-month country action plans
- Take urgent steps to finalise the setting up of the NIPN structure
- Start the implementation phase, producing outputs (data landscape, policy review) and taking steps in the NIPN process (questions, analysis, findings)
- Track progress and engage in quarterly progress monitoring calls with GSF.

Appendix A: List of participants

BANGLADESH	
Mashud ALAM	Director Demography and Health Wing, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
Jillian WAID	NIPN Project Coordinator, Helen Keller International
BURKINA FASO	
Baguinébié BAZONGO	Chef de Service Etudes, Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie
Ella COMPAORÉ	Secrétaire Technique, Ministère de la Santé
Pascal NAKELSE	Directeur Informatique, Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie
Bertine OUARO	Directrice de la Nutrition, Ministère de la Santé
Ann TARINI	Conseillère Technique PNIN, AEDES
COTE D'IVOIRE	
Patrice BOSSO	Chef Unité Planification Suivi Evaluation, UNICEF
Denis GARNIER	Conseiller Technique PNIN, UNICEF
Louis Ahoutou N'DRI	Conseiller PNIN en Politique et Stratégie, Conseil National de la Nutrition
Faustin Konan N'DRI	Responsable de Projet PNIN, Conseil National de la Nutrition
Patricia NGORAN-THECKLY YOBOUE	Coordonnatrice du Secrétariat Technique, Conseil National de la Nutrition
ETHIOPIA	
Anne BOSSUYT	NIPN Technical Advisor, IFPRI
Solomon Eshetu HAILU	NIPN Project Coordinator, Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI)
Ruth Bekele MIJENA	Co-chair for M&E of National Nutrition Plan, Ethiopian Institute for Agricultural Research (EIAR)
Pierre-Luc VANHAEVERBEKE	Project Officer, Delegation of the European Union
GUATEMALA	
Claudia BARILLAS	Task Manager, Delegation of the European Union
Juan Carlos CARIAS ESTRADA	Secretario, Secretaría de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional
Laura FIGUEROA	Enlace del SIGSA - MSPAS, Ministerio de Salud
Sandra Rosario RECINOS POITEVIN	Asesora Técnica PNIN, CATIE
Eduardo Rolando SAY CHAVEZ	Coordinator de Proyecto PNIN, CATIE
Otto VELASQUEZ	Director de Planificacion, Monitoreo y Evaluacion, Secretaría de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional
KENYA	
James Theuri GATUNGU	Director, Production Statistics Directorate, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
Gladys Mogotu MUGAMBI	Chief Nutrition Officer / SUN Focal Point, Ministry of Health
Mathew Ajuoga MUMA	Senior Policy Analyst, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
LAOS	
Keovilay KHAMHOUNG	Acting Chief of Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Section, UNICEF
Philavong KHAMSENG	Deputy Director, Nutrition Center, Ministry of Health
Voladet SAYKHAM	Acting Director General, Center for Socio-Economic Science and Policy Research, National Institute for Economic Research (NIER)
Ounavong SISOMBOUN	Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment
Raspone SITTHIROTH	Acting Director General, Center for Development Policy Research, Ministry of Planning and Investment
NIGER	
Aboubacar MAHAMADOU	Responsable Santé Nutrition, Haut-Commissariat à l'Initiative 3N
Issiak Balarabé MAHAMANE	Assistant du Secrétaire Général, Institut National de la Statistique
Guillaume POIREL	Conseiller Technique PNIN, SOFRECO

UGANDA	
Cecilia DE BUSTOS	Nutrition Manager, UNICEF
Sarah KABAIJA	Social Policy Expert, UNICEF
James MUWONGE	Director, Socio-Economic Surveys, Uganda Bureau of Statistics
ZAMBIA	
Marion MICHAUD	Project Officer, Delegation of the European Union
Musonda J. MOFU	Acting Executive Director, National Food and Nutrition Commission
Mike MWANZA	Programme Officer, National Food and Nutrition Commission
Iven SIKANYITI	Programme Officer, Central Statistics Office
Goodson SINYENGA	Acting Director, Central Statistics Office
DONORS	
Carla DA SILVA SORNETA	Project Officer, European Commission - Development and Cooperation Directorate
Abi PERRY	Nutrition Advisor, UK Department for International Development
Rahul RAWAT	Program Officer, Data Analytics and Evidence, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
EXPERTS	
Maurizio BECCHERLE	IT Expert, Dure Technology
Christine FENNING	Researcher, MOKORO
Alta FOLSCHER	Principal Consultant, MOKORO
Lola GOSTELOW	Nutrition Independent Consultant
Hajra HAFEEZ-UR-REHNAN	Nutrition Policy Independent Consultant
William KNECHTEL	Data Manager, SUN Movement Secretariat
Jef LEROY	Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI
Stephen TURNER	Principal Consultant, MOKORO
GSF	
Mélanie BROIN	Project Coordinator, NIPN Global Support Facility
Julien CHALIMBAUD	Technical Expert, NIPN Global Support Facility
Perrine GENIEZ	Technical Expert, NIPN Global Support Facility
Gabrielle LARTIA	Project Assistant, NIPN Global Support Facility
Milko SKOFIC	Technical Expert, NIPN Global Support Facility
Marti VAN LIERE	Team Leader, NIPN Global Support Facility
FACILITATION & REPORTING	
Jane BADHAM	Managing Director, JB Consultancy
Shirley FAIRALL	Independent Writer and Editor

Appendix B: Details of Niger and Guatemala presentations

CHARACTERISTICS AND STRENGTHS OF NIPN IN NIGER

Strategic management is provided by High Commission for the 3N initiative (HC3N), which is taking a leading and coordinating role between the implementation of the platform and project stakeholders from different sectors. The National Institute of Statistics (INS) is responsible for technical execution which includes centralising, cleaning, harmonising and anonymising data. They are also responsible for analysis. In addition Niger has a steering committee in charge of defining strategic priorities and a NIPN management committee. A technical committee guides and supervises NIPN, forming the link with the decision-making process, particularly in relation to the Nutritional Security Policy and its Action Plan. Niger's experience shows that the most important thing for the smooth running of the project is real consensus on how NIPN is implemented.

Consensus is reached through:

- Shared tasks for synergy between the main beneficiaries
- A multi-sectoral coordination structure attached to the Presidency which helps to avoid conflicts between departments
- A National Multi-Sectoral Nutritional Security Policy whose development was piloted with nutrition focal point in each of the ministries concerned
- An Inter-ministerial Orientation Committee chaired by the country's President to whom it reports regularly
- The coordinating body of the National Statistical System has strong experience in programme/project planning and management and the authority to endorse a leading role in NIPN for data recovery, analysis, valuation and dissemination
- Since 2015 we consulted with our many stakeholders and now most actors, partners and indirect beneficiaries are aware of the project and its objectives
- Our experience has been characterised by a strong synergy with the technical assistance component of NIPN
- The dynamics of cooperation between direct beneficiaries and partners as reflected in coordination and technical meetings and exchanges

Preliminary phase - steps taken:

- A prospective analysis about the interest of the country for the implementation of the NIPN programme (2015)
- The identification of the main stakeholders and beneficiary organisations
- Diagnosis of the IT information technology environment and meetings between GSF and project beneficiaries
- Preparation of the project documents (December 2016 - February 2017)
- Signature of contracts (August 2017)
- Mobilisation of Technical Assistance (November 2017)

Inception phase - steps taken:

- Carry out a data landscape of nutrition related data (December 2017 - May 2018)
- Diagnosis of the information technology environment (by the technical assistance partner)
- Realign the technical assistance and INS work plans and budgets
- Take into account concerns of the beneficiaries, proposed and validated by the Delegation of the European Union
- Set up the internal and technical assistance NIPN teams, rehabilitate premises, buy material...
- Form the National Steering Committee of NIPN, mainly composed of secretaries general of ministries
- Develop a joint technical assistance/INS inception report, including annual and multi-year work programs, logical framework, training and capacity building plan

Data analysis/information production cycle - steps taken:

- Recruitment of the NIPN team
- Elaboration of the report for the first half of the technical assistance
- Weekly coordination meetings of the NIPN team
- Centralisation of the databases hosted by INS
- Participation in knowledge sharing meetings
- Training of computer scientists at INS as part of the set up and management of servers
- Training in editorial techniques
- Training in anonymization of data

Question analysis cycle - steps taken:

- Formalise coordination frameworks through the development of legislation regulating the operation of the Technical Committee of the National Programme for Nutrition Security (PNSN)
- Identify the members of the Technical Committee
- Hold several meetings with partners and sectors

Information dissemination cycle - background:

Information will be disseminated through a dedicated NIPN web portal at INS level. The tools identified for the platform are:

- A forum space accessible to all that will allow different stakeholders to learn about events, news, ongoing programs, strategies, enquiries, etc
- A collaborative project management suite reserved for beneficiaries. The Redmine Tool, already set up for the management and monitoring of the programme, will be set up to allow the management/monitoring of other projects/programmes
- An indicator module (monitoring/evaluation and others) and the results of the analyses carried out in the context of NIPN, accessible to all. We chose the DevInfo tool because INS has the technical skills and capacity to maintain it long term, and it is extensively used in other sectors
- A publications area accessible to all that will store and archive all the publications on sensitive nutrition, the publications produced by NIPN, and other publications
- An archiving module for stored data that will be available for download by all users. These databases are treated, cleaned and anonymised.
- A module of data cleaning, storage, analysis and interpretation. This is a storage space of the databases, but also methodological tools, manuals, guides and training toolkit of the programme. This space will be reserved for high level.

This portal will give NIPN a life force and serve as a communication space. A provisional version will be live in the first quarter of 2019.

Information dissemination cycle - steps taken:

- The graphic chart of NIPN
- The communication and visibility plan
- The specifications of the NIPN portal including tools for dissemination, sharing and analysis of information

Information dissemination cycle - next steps:

- Adoption of the plan of action
- Operationalisation of the NIPN portal (even if content is minimal initially)
- Realisation of an infomercial on NIPN
- The second meeting of the National Steering Committee
- Preparation of the second semi-annual report of the technical assistance
- Development of the first annual report of the NIPN project
- All regular activities

Next challenges:

- Assign clear responsibilities and determine the attributions of each organisation/team member through stronger institutionalisation (define and allocate responsibilities, action, and how they will be taken) to ensure the sustainability and monitoring/evaluation of programme activities
- Strengthen multi-sectoral coordination to take into account aspects related to nutrition-sensitive interventions
- Contribute to the strengthening and upgrading of nutrition information systems in the sectors (some information systems are optimal such as Health and Education, others are very late)

Questions and answers:

Q	What is your experience of identifying policy related matters that will benefit from information and engagement?
A	<p>We had to map interventions, analyse structure, and decide on contributors. The fundamental work was to re-orient policy; most of the data we had already collected was used for policy implementation. It took team work, consensus, and compromise. We had to give way sometimes.</p> <p>The data generated by the platform will be fed into the multi-sectoral strategy committee meetings: we bring them all together and get them to talk to each other. We translate data into simple and clear messages for decision-makers so that we can advocate at committee level, plus other partners, donors and academics. We have to orient the research for long-lasting improvement.</p> <p>Having the highest level of political commitment raises the status of the project and of nutrition.</p>
Q	Does the data you collect relate to services provided or also to nutrition outcomes?
A	Most comes from regular information updates from the Ministry of Public Health, which collects most statistical information and has routine information updates.
Q	We're going to start activities so we're getting a multi-sectoral committee together. How many members and how many meetings do you consider is optimum? Also, how do you check your data?
A	<p>We have our inter-ministerial strategy meeting chaired and organised by the President himself. He convenes it as many times as he wants, generally once a month, and we've been part of this for four years. These meetings existed before NIPN.</p> <p>The Steering Committee brings together all production sectors into a multi-sectoral strategy meeting connected with governance, so we made use of this existing structure. NIPN strengthens an already favourable environment.</p> <p>The platform is located in the National Institute for Statistics so we check our own data and also data from other sectors: this is how we guarantee its reliability. We have a database of micro data that clarifies the quality of information used.</p>
Q	How can we shortcut the process? Lots of preparation is required to start but children can't wait. Also, how sustainable is the project?
A	<p>It helps to create a mechanism to find consensus, to hold regular coordination meetings. It's hard to take shortcuts because analysis takes as long as it takes and if we skip something we can't meet our country's demands.</p> <p>Sustainability is the ultimate objective which is why we put our platform at the INS level. There is activity and the budget is already included: this turns the platform into a reality.</p>
Q	What are the challenges in existing structures?
A	We make a distinction between HC3N and the multi-sectoral structure: it leads and encourages reforms which require resources and it's their job to implement. Working with several sectors means absorb their difficulties; ministries have different needs, and; sometimes we don't factor in the cost of coordination.
Q	Is there a two-way dialogue that deepens with follow up questions?
A	Niger: It's a process. A committee receives information and the technical committee transfers this to lower levels. We also have a forum on our portal so that other users like NGOs, academics and researchers can ask questions, and we have parliamentary conferences with community activity in their programmes to disseminate information.

CHARACTERISTICS AND STRENGTHS OF NIPN IN GUATEMALA

In 2005 congress passed a law that gives all ministries direct responsibility to improve nutrition through a food safety and nutrition policy. This led to the highest national nutrition authority, SINASAN (Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional; National Council for Food and Nutritional Security), which meets four times per annum and they decide the pace of implementing different initiatives.

We have a clear planning cycle. From February to June, planning is done for the next year, from June to September the plan is translated into a budget, and from November to January everything is being lined up for when Congress meets to approve the budget.

The Ministry of Finance distributes funds, deciding who gets how much of the budget and where it should be spent. 16 government institutions are linked in some way and 33% of the budget is allocated to the Ministry of Health.

NIPN strengthens Guatemala’s nutrition initiatives by:

- Strengthening our national capacities to monitor chronic malnutrition
- Collecting existing data from all sectors as a resource for information and analysis
- Orienting the developing evidence-based policies and programmes
- Giving information about the impact of interventions

NIPN is an effective mechanism and focus for supporting the needs of decision-makers by feeding into SINASAN data that originates from the public and private sectors, civil society and international cooperation institutions. It integrates information tools in a unique system that improves multi-sectoral dialogue.

In August 2017 a new organisation, CATIE, Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Centre, joined Guatemala’s fight against chronic malnutrition. CATIE is linked to the university and will help with implementation and coordination.

The Ministry of Public Health and Social Services is in charge of monitoring the state of the health of children in our country through their Integrated Management System in Health. The system provides precise information on the health of every child. Each child is registered with a reference number and all their details such as vaccines are entered and monitored. This health services network is directly linked to about 200,000 points nationally such as hospitals and clinics, and it helps to allocate resources.

The challenges:

There are a lot of systems to be integrated, not many ways of analysing actions, different hierarchies of access, a need to strengthen internal coordination and local governance, and a need to ensure the schools programme is being implemented.

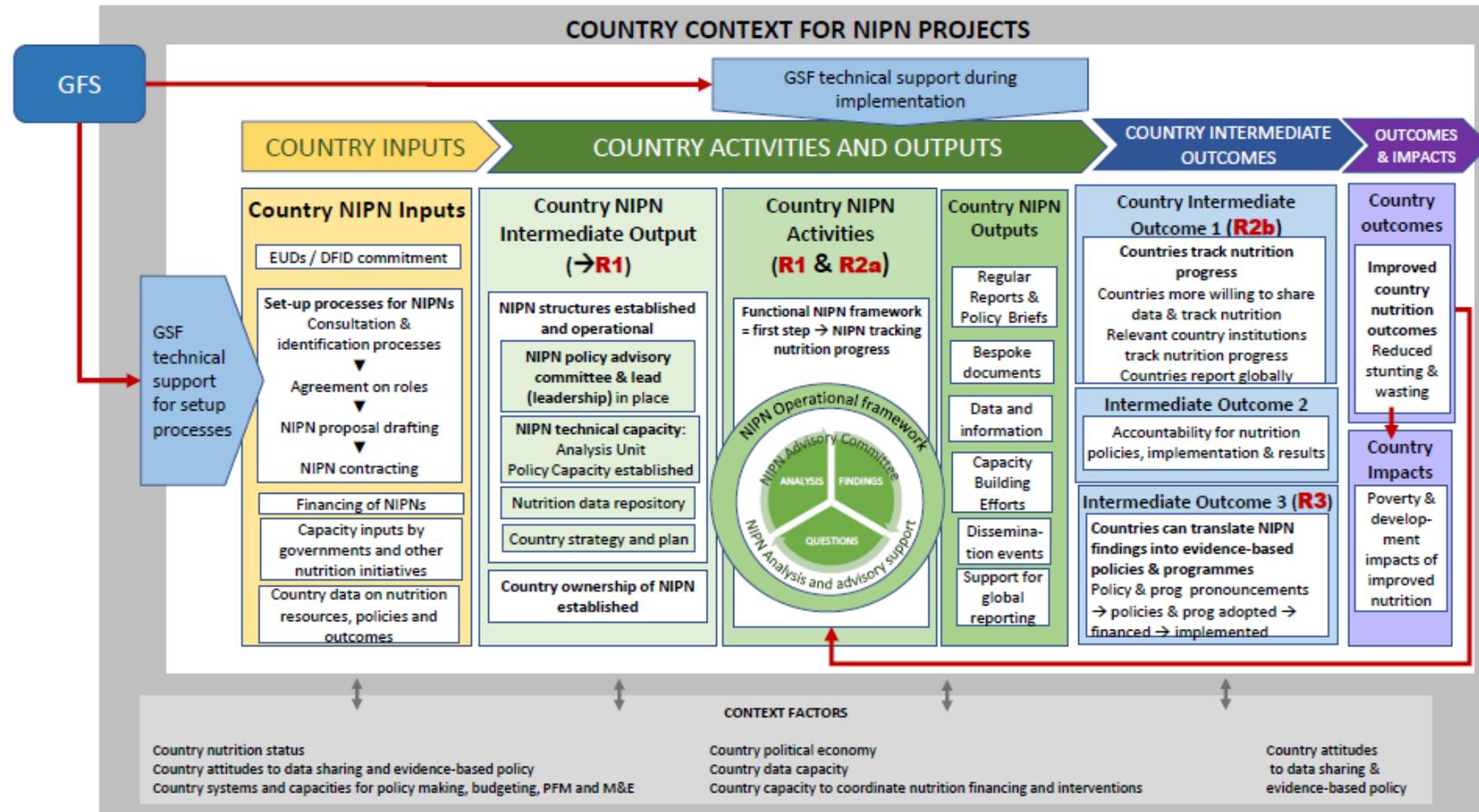
Questions and answers:

Q	How did you decide which expenses would apply for nutrition and which would not?
A	We started logically and used the UNICEF guide for reducing chronic malnutrition. We made a checklist of all budgets and people, came up with a financial analysis and collaborated with different ministries to get monitoring information. Guatemala already had a national chronic malnutrition strategy which all ministers are involved in, and a general budget.
Q	Does the data you collect relate to services provided or also to nutrition outcomes?
A	Most of the information we have comes from regular information updates from the Ministry of Public Health, which collects most statistical information and has routine information updates.
Q	Education requires time to impact so it’s difficult to prioritise. What are your recommendations for priorities?
A	Education is a problem but water is our major priority. We need to guarantee universal access to enough quality water for minimum levels of public health. Education using informal, behavioural change tries to reinforce good daily habits among uneducated mothers.

Q	How did your country come to pass a malnutrition law?
A	It took about 13 years of work. Political will and support were the most important ingredients.
Q	Is your data analysis applied to all data or coordinated on a national level and also on a lower administrative level?
A	It's important that the food security system needs are coordinated at national level by a state representative secretariat, and then at local level we have about 70 food safety and nutrition workers coordinate in the field.
Q	What is your goal and how will you achieve it?
A	Our long term goal is to achieve a 25% reduction in chronic malnutrition by 2032. A presidential committee has a shorter term goal of a 10% reduction in 4 years but we've only reduced by 0.05% in 30 years. We know there's a lot of work ahead.
Q	How do you allocate budget?
A	The budget we presented for food security is 5-6% of the national budget. We spend an average of 75% of that every year. Of the 15 government institutions that use the budget, some have spending challenges. The ministries that have people spread locally through the country get more budget and vice versa.
Q	Is there a two-way dialogue that deepens with follow up questions?
A	The platform is adapted to the country's needs. The government helps us gather data. We're filling gaps in the system and are currently developing a study with a form that will help collect data from different public institutes. The Ministry of Development has a system gathering information from different sectors. We will communicate this via the platform as we continue to expand.

Appendix C: NIPN proposed Theory of Change

NIPN Country Projects TOC



Appendix D: Concluding remarks from countries

Bangladesh: *“I was very grateful to learn about the topics we discussed: how to formulate questions, the basics of this discussion, data analysis, etc. It was very useful to talk about a policy advisory committee, who will chair it and how to organise it. I learnt from other colleagues. Please stay in touch so that we can connect and help each other in future”.*

Burkina Faso: *“We have learnt a lot from other countries and were reassured to see most are on the same level as us. We have a better understanding of the spirit of NIPN and how it is organised globally. It’s a big and meaningful initiative. We have to pick up speed! We feel a stronger connections to others in our team. We share a vision, and we had time for in-depth analysis of the vision. We have jointly defined the priorities for the coming months”.*

Cote d’Ivoire: *“We’ve strengthened our team, reinforced our connections with other teams, and understood their experiences. We need a permanent dialogue in our country. Now we have a roadmap for the next six months. NIPN will reinforce our existing structure”.*

Ethiopia: *“This is the first time we feel NIPN as a global initiative. Every programme is different and we need to be careful about blindly adopting tools - we need to choose the right ones and adapt to our needs. We learnt a lot about data management and websites. We want to stay in communication and it would be good if GSF could make that happen”.*

Guatemala: *“We’ve learnt a lot and we know that we all have challenges to overcome, but we’re not alone. We recommend thinking about capacity building in one specific area. On bilateral exchange between countries, we’d be interested in seeing Niger and inviting you to visit us”.*

Kenya: *“This was a very good forum for interaction. We gained a lot as a country. We’re still at the initial stage and some of our questions have been answered and simplified by discussions. Lots of countries have tools that we can borrow and adapt. We saw solutions to some of our challenges and structured admin initiatives”.*

Laos: *“This has been very wonderful. It’s been good to meet our friends in other countries. We have learnt that we need the commitment of our government”.*

Niger: *“Although we and Guatemala are ahead, we are facing the same challenges as everybody else. Based on our experience, you need a solid foundation for the programme, especially when building skills and competence. Many countries have not really determined their training programmes yet. We’ve also seen the challenge of setting up inter-ministerial and multi-sectoral committees”.*

Uganda: *“We’ve been talking about teamwork and we saw that during Guatemala’s presentation when the team got involved. That’s a lesson we need to take to the multi-sectoral level. There is a lot of information out there, very few know its importance and we need to think about how we communicate it, packaging simplicity with experience. We learn from challenges in other countries; sharing speeds up the process”.*

Zambia: *“We can mirror ourselves in other countries. We’ve learnt that formulating questions is important, not to make complicated analyses, and that we should use the data that does exist. NIPN can be considered a stimulator for strengthening information systems”.*

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