



European
Commission

Aligning with food and nutrition security priorities

*Lessons on multisectoral
coordination from
National Information Platforms
for Nutrition (NIPN) Ethiopia*



International
Partnerships

Cover: Sekota Wereda. A woman of the Hamusit Kebele community is feeding her two year old daughter porridge made of nutritionally balanced ingredients
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About the NIPN initiative

NIPN (National Information Platforms for Nutrition) is an initiative of the European Commission, whose implementation is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and UNICEF. NIPN aims to strengthen national capacities to manage and analyse information and data from all sectors that influence nutrition, and to disseminate and use this information to better guide policymaking in the fight against undernutrition.

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List of Acronyms

AC	Advisory committee
Ag4Nut	Agriculture for Nutrition (Project)
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
C4N	Capacity for Nutrition
CNA	Capacity needs assessments
EC	European Commission
EDHS	Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey
EIAR	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
EMDHS	Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey
ENN	Emergency Nutrition Network
EPHI	Ethiopian Public Health Institute
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FNP	Food and nutrition policy
FNS	Food and nutrition strategy
GNR	Global Nutrition Report
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MAC	Multisectoral advisory committee
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MER-SC	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoWE	Ministry of Water and Energy
NCD	Non-communicable disease
NIPN	National Information Platform for Nutrition
NNCB	National nutrition coordinating body
NNP	National nutrition plan
NNS	National nutrition strategy
NNTC	National nutrition technical committee
NPAN	National plan of action for nutrition
PQF	Policy question formulation
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
SUN FP	Scaling Up Nutrition focal point
TASC	Technical Assistance to Strengthen Capabilities (Project for SUN countries)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNN	UN Nutrition
WFP	World Food Programme

Summary

This case study was designed by Capacity for Nutrition - National Information Platforms for Nutrition (C4N-NIPN) in order to share experiences and lessons learned about the way NIPN in Ethiopia is integrated in the country's multisectoral, multistakeholder mechanisms, and especially its involvement in the National Food and Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER-SC). The project components applied a comprehensive and inclusive approach. To which extent did this approach and its integration into the national multisectoral nutrition environment enhance the multisectoral food security and nutrition coordination,

and the collaboration mechanisms of the National Nutrition Strategy, the National Nutrition Plan II (NNP II) and the Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP)?

The case study aims to provide guidance to other NIPN countries on how to leverage their approach to better align NIPN activities (e.g. capacity development, the Policy Question Formulation (PQF) process, data collection and management and the generation of evidence) for the benefit of national nutrition plan and programme implementation. The case study focuses on the following three issues:

NIPN contributions to multisectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination and collaboration

Does NIPN's participation on a national multisectoral committee such as the MER-SC create opportunities to contribute to multisector-multistakeholder coordination and collaboration in support of implementing National Action Plans for Nutrition?

Does it also enable the multisectoral committee to guide and influence NIPN activities more specifically?

Findings

NIPN products and outputs can be directly communicated to a high-level committee, gaining visibility and sharing

products and evidence with its members and sectors. NIPN can thus more easily inform and potentially influence this process and advise policymakers.

The committee has the opportunity to guide and influence the work of NIPN in alignment with its needs and objectives. NIPN products can, therefore, be designed to meet specific needs and demands for the implementation of National Nutrition Plans.

NIPN contributions to policy and programme development

Does NIPN's presence on the MER-SC enable core NIPN activities (capacity needs assessments, capacity development activities and the PQF process with the respective creation of evidence) to be planned and implemented in a way that maximises effectiveness and value for the different sectors and stakeholders involved in implementing multisectoral National Nutrition Plans?

Findings

The MER-SC and other bodies have asked NIPN to conduct studies and support decision-making by

generating evidence that was used in the process of drafting the new Food and Nutrition Strategy (FNS).

NIPN conducted a progress analysis on the previous National Nutrition Plan (NNP II), the results of which were used to design an M&E framework for the FNS.

NIPN membership of the MER-SC and its participation in various high-level meetings also enables NIPN to adjust its work, ensuring outputs are timely and relevant.

NIPN contributions to capacity development

Does the above-mentioned participation enhance the potential impact of NIPN products (e.g. capacity development activities) on nutrition policies and programmes?

Findings

NIPN has conducted several capacity development activities, despite the limitations caused by the

COVID-19 pandemic, and these were considered very valuable, although this might have been irrespective of the presence of NIPN on the MER-SC. It was suggested that such NIPN contributions could be of even greater value if training activities were to focus not only on data management, research, etc., but also on the building or strengthening of basic nutrition capacities in other sectors and at sub-national level.

Methodology

In 2021, an outline of the planned case study was drafted by C4N-NIPN and shared with the NIPN team in Ethiopia, other stakeholders, and partners in order that feedback and advice might be used to enable a smooth implementation and to maximise its potential benefits and value. Based on the feedback received, the outline was revised and finalised by end of July. Interviewees were identified in close consultation with the NIPN team and partners in Ethiopia, while relevant documents and literature were collected for a desk review. The interviewees comprised members of the MER-SC and other stakeholders.

C4N-NIPN drafted a list of guiding questions, which was shared with the interviewees during the process of scheduling the interviews, which was managed by members of the NIPN team in Ethiopia. The interviews were conducted in August and September 2021. Based on the information gathered through desk review and interviews, a first draft report was prepared by C4N-NIPN and shared with the NIPN team and other stakeholders in Ethiopia for comments and feedback in December 2021.



Two women and their children in Dharito Health Post. © UNICEF/UN0141423/Sewunet

Background

Nutrition situation in Ethiopia

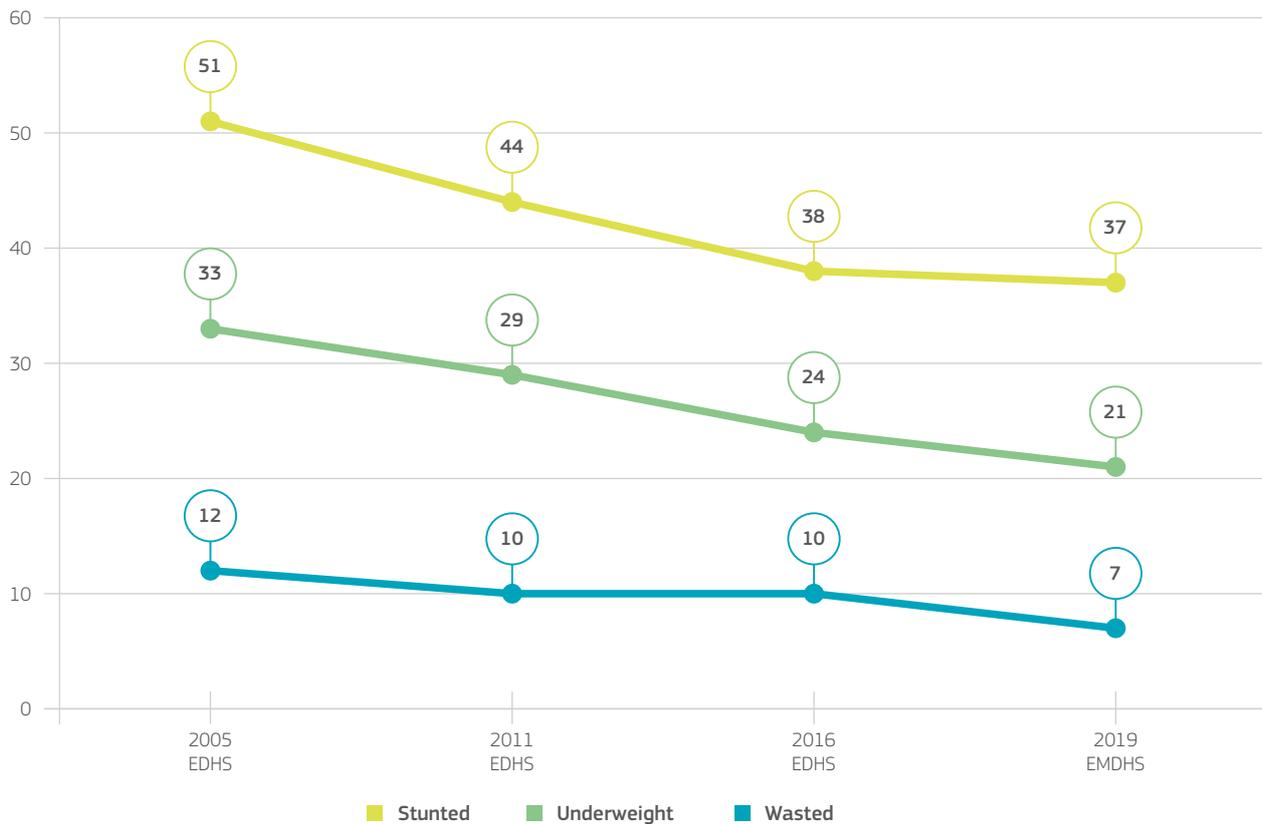
Survey data show¹ that stunting has been reduced in Ethiopia from 58% in 2000 to 37% in 2019. The highest proportion of stunting of children (45%) was observed at age 24-35 months, and it is also slightly higher among boys than girls (40% versus 33%). Although stunting has declined significantly Ethiopia is not on course to meet the World Health Assembly (WHA) stunting target for 2025. The percentage of underweight children fell from 41% to 24% and wasting from 12% to 10% respectively. In addition, a high prevalence of various

forms of malnutrition among vulnerable groups has had serious implications for social development and economic growth. However, if efforts will be made to accelerate the reduction of stunting, Ethiopia could still meet the 2025 WHA target.

Anaemia prevalence among children under five remains high, at 57%, a number that increased between 2011 and 2016. Among women aged 15-49 years, 26% are undernourished and 24% have anaemia.

1 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Surveys (EDHS) 2000, 2005, 2011, 2016 and Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey (EMDHS) 2019

Trends in nutritional status of children (%)



While 97% of children are breastfed, only 58% are exclusively breastfed during the first six months. In terms of food groups, only 4% eat from four or more food groups; and just 45% of children are fed at least three times a day.

Micronutrient deficiencies in iron, vitamin A, folic acid, iodine and zinc remain a problem.

In 2019 in Ethiopia, an estimated 8.5% of adult women (aged 18 years and over) and 2.4% of adult men are living with obesity, indicating little to no progress towards achieving the target for obesity of the diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD) targets².

Despite achievements made over many years, Ethiopia is also frequently subject to natural disasters such as

droughts, floods, locust infestation, etc. The COVID-19 pandemic, political unrest and military conflict have added to the problem of malnutrition. It can be expected that nutrition indicators might have worsened significantly at least in some regions since 2020.

The Food Security and Nutrition Working Group issued an alert in October 2021, estimating that one million children in the country require urgent treatment for severe wasting, while 3.5 million children and pregnant mothers will need treatment for moderate wasting. Critical levels of acute malnutrition above emergency thresholds have been reported in Tigray, Afar and Somali regions with deterioration noted in Amhara region.

Nutrition governance and multisector coordination and collaboration in Ethiopia

Nutrition is recognised by the Government of Ethiopia as an important development issue and is a political priority. The first National Nutrition Programme 2008-2015 (NNP I) focused on integrating and coordinating nutrition-specific interventions that

addressed the immediate causes of suboptimal growth and development and the potential effects of nutrition-sensitive interventions that address the underlying determinants of malnutrition. The programme aimed to create an enabling environment through which

² <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/eastern-africa/ethiopia/>

nutrition interventions were governed and supported by evidence-enhanced decision making.

In July 2015, the Government of Ethiopia issued the Seqota Declaration, committing to eradicate the underlying causes of chronic undernutrition and to end stunting among children under 2 by 2030. It has been endorsed and embedded into Ethiopia's National Growth and Transformation Plan, making it among the country's highest-level commitments. The Seqota Declaration will be managed under the National Nutrition Programme II (NNP II) and implemented by NNP implementing sectors.

NIPN in Ethiopia has played a significant role in supporting the implementation of NNP II, but also in reviewing its progress and providing evidence, information and recommendations to inform the new FNS. NIPN is currently also supporting the baseline survey in order to guide the implementation of the FNS. The NNP II 2016-2020 (now being succeeded by the Food and Nutrition Strategy 2020/21-2030/31) was developed with the aim of maintaining the achievements of the NNP I, and to accelerate the reduction of malnutrition.

It provided a framework for the implementation of evidence-based interventions to achieve the nutrition-related targets. The NNP II had five strategic objectives, (i) improve the nutritional status of women and adolescents; (ii) improve the nutritional status of children under five; (iii) improve the delivery of nutrition services for communicable and non-communicable diseases; (iv) strengthen the implementation of nutrition-sensitive interventions; and (v) improve multi-sectoral coordination.

The NNP II is supported by a National Nutrition Coordinating Body (NNCB) to facilitate its implementation. The NNCB is chaired by the deputy prime minister and convening ministries from 13 sectors as well as other nutrition stakeholders. A National Food and Nutrition Technical Committee (NFNTC) supporting the NNCB was established in 2009 to ensure the multisectoral coordination for nutrition and to lead the implementation of the NNP II from 2016 to 2020 in all relevant sectors. In addition, the NNCB created different sub-committees including the MER-SC and assigned chairing offices.

National Nutrition Steering Committees in Ethiopia



The MER-SC includes 12 sectoral ministries and sectoral organisations, government agencies, universities, international research institutes, donors, UN agencies, civil society, and international and national non-governmental organisations. It provides technical support and direction to generate evidence, monitor progress and inform decision-making in a timely way for successful implementation of the NNP II and the Food and Nutrition Strategy (FNS), which was launched in May 2021. The MER-SC is a multisector-multistakeholder committee, although not all of the officially invited members participate regularly.

The MER-SC is chaired by the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) and meets quarterly. Since the new FNS was developed, this role has been shared with the

Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR).

The EPHI was formed through the merger of the National Research Institute of Health, the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute and the Department of Traditional Medicine in the Ministry of Health. It focuses on supporting health research and sharing information; detecting, preventing, and preparing for public health risks; and building the capacity of the nation's health and food science laboratories.

The EIAR is a national research institution responsible for generating, improving and adapting technologies, as well as coordinating and assisting research activities to fulfil Ethiopia's current and long-term agricultural requirements. It is supervised by a board chaired by the Minister of Agriculture.

Both institutions are autonomous federal institutions and accountable to the respective line ministries.

The NNP II was built thanks to a strong national partnership between nutrition development partners, multilateral and bilateral donors, academia, the private sector and implementing sector ministries with a clear monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. The accountability and results matrix outlines the core results, targets and their indicators, as well as the sectors accountable and the measuring period for these indicators. Progress towards achieving the desired results compared to the baseline was mixed, according to an analysis by NIPN Ethiopia³.

Although significant progress has been made in nutrition, Ethiopia still needs concerted efforts to accelerate the reduction of malnutrition. The progress seen during NNP II revealed that nutritional outcomes and access to services in Ethiopia vary across regions depending on residence and wealth. The variations risk slowing the progress anticipated and need to be addressed to improve overall nutritional well-being.

Limited data on certain target groups (such as adolescents) and indicators (women's diets and non-communicable disease rates) hampers efforts to use evidence for programming and reduce malnutrition. In this context, establishing nutrition information

platforms that bring together existing nutrition data was considered to be an example of 'best practice' by the NNP II progress review.

Although there was progress in most NNP II indicators, few of the NNP II targets were achieved. To adequately assess progress in future national programmes, data for indicators relating to process, outputs and outcomes need to be consistently measured.

The national FNP was endorsed in November 2018 as the NNP II was perceived as not sufficiently addressing food aspects and ineffective for multisectoral coordination. The FNP addresses food security, food safety, food quality, post-harvest management, and other system-level issues including multisectoral approaches and institutional arrangements for food and nutrition governance. Based on the FNP, the FNS was developed as the sole national strategy for food and nutrition.

The strategy is organised into strategic objectives, strategic directions and strategic initiatives. It serves as a reference for all the implementing sectors and indicates in a succinct format their lead and supporting roles, strategic actions and key performance indicators. The sectors are expected to reflect the strategic actions in their sectoral strategic plans, and develop detailed activities and relevant sector-specific guidelines and implementation manuals.

3 The National Nutrition Programme (2016-2020). Progress analysis: Evidence for the upcoming Food and Nutrition Strategy Development



Nutrition capacities in Ethiopia

The Capacity Needs Assessment, implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI)⁴, found that capacities to reduce malnutrition in Ethiopia are lacking at all levels – and especially in remote and otherwise

‘challenged’ regions. This applies to organisational, system-related and human resource capacities. Skilled human resources in nutrition and food security are lacking in both quality and quantity, and there are concerns about the capacity to manage, retain and

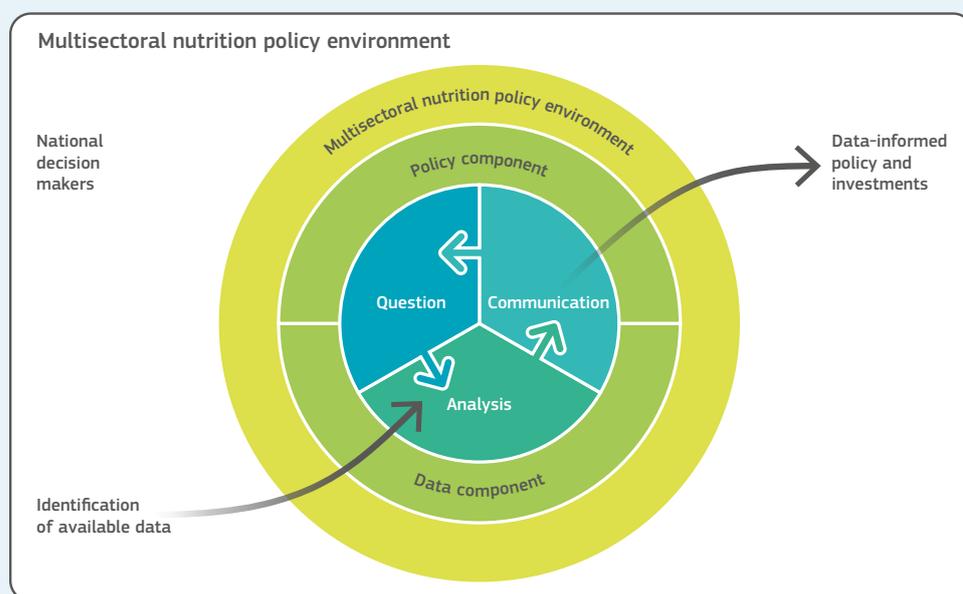
National Information Platforms for Nutrition

NIPN started in 2016 as an initiative by the European Commission to strengthen nutrition information systems and data analysis to better inform strategic decisions in Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lao PDR, and Uganda.

The NIPN approach is to identify, prioritise and answer nutrition policy relevant questions by analysing data to generate evidence for policy development, programme design and fund allocation. NIPN mostly uses existing information and data through a 3-stage operational cycle:

- I. Question formulation based on government priorities;
- II. Data analysis to inform the questions;
- III. Communication of the findings back to government.

The NIPN Approach



It includes a **policy component** which convenes and facilitates a multisectoral advisory committee, playing a key role in policy question formulation, interpreting the results of data analysis and communicating the findings.

It also has a **data component** that collates multisectoral data in a central repository and conducts analyses.

The NIPN Multisectoral Advisory Committee guides the country team, validates its work, and ensures that information flows between NIPN and the national multisectoral mechanisms for nutrition.

effectively use the existing staff. These problems are even more pronounced in sectors that have roles and responsibilities to mainstream and implement nutrition-related interventions other than health and agriculture, but lack the educational background or experience in nutrition. Many staff members are young and have little experience, with only a small number of female experts employed of which few are higher educated. Access to uninterrupted electricity, internet, software, e-libraries, office space, laboratories and vehicles is insufficient for all institutions.

More than half of the implementing ministries do not have case teams or directorates to lead nutrition programmes. Despite the adverse effect of hunger on Ethiopia's gross domestic product, government investment in nutrition and nutrition capacities is low and heavily dependent on donors⁵.

NIPN in Ethiopia

NIPN was launched in Ethiopia in 2018 and is implemented by the EPHI within the Ministry of Health (MoH), with support and in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

During the design phase, NIPN was purposely embedded into high-level committees. The position of EPHI as chair of the MER-SC gave NIPN the advantage of automatically becoming a member of the committee.

In relation to NIPN, the role of the MER-SC consists of providing support, technical and strategic advice as well as guidance to NIPN; it also monitors progress and requests specific outputs.

Given the scope of work and the MER-SC's broad responsibilities, a dedicated NIPN Advisory Committee (AC) was formed as official relay between the NIPN and nutrition decision-making at the national level. It was established in 2019 and expected to meet twice per year. The AC consists of a small group of advisors with high-level decision-making leverage and close ministerial links. Its role is to ensure that the NIPN's activities reflect high-level decision makers' priorities for nutrition. The NIPN AC provides advice and supports the uptake of NIPN outputs by decision makers.

The two committees are intended to complement each other (see Annex 3), with the AC focusing on policy issues and the MER-SC on operational issues and facilitating NIPN implementation.

Policy question formulation process

NIPN in Ethiopia conducted a first round of PQF in 2019 to identify and prioritise policy questions that could be answered by NIPN. The process started with a review of relevant policies and additional communication with key sectors. The large number of potential questions generated were reduced to a shortlist of 22. These were discussed in a stakeholder workshop in September 2019,

resulting in 12 questions being prioritised. Seven of these were used to inform the FNS and thus the high-level programme implementation for the next five years.

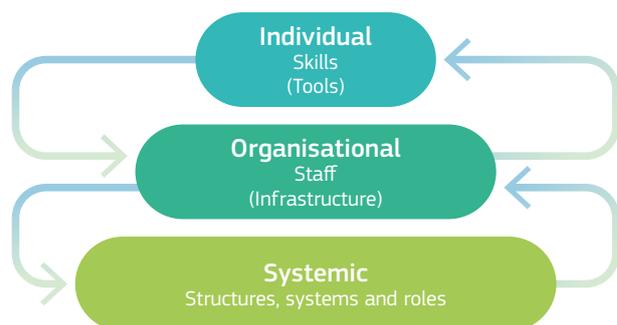
Additional policy questions have been raised by the MoH outside the PQF cycle with a request to NIPN to provide evidence, indicating interest in the process.

A second round of PQF was conducted towards the end of 2020 and additional policy questions were received from the Ethiopian Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical Industry Development Institute, indicating growing interest. The respective reports and briefs were drafted in 2021 and are being finalised at the time of writing. The NIPN team in Ethiopia continues its interactive operational cycles of questions – analysis – findings, and continuously revises the approach based on experience of the previous rounds.

Capacity strengthening approach and strategy

NIPN designed a capacity needs assessment (CNA) in Ethiopia in 2018 to identify existing capacities and additional capacities needed to implement the NIPN.

The NIPN CNA framework



(Based on: Potter, C and Brough, R. Systemic Capacity Building: A Hierarchy of Needs. *Health Policy and Planning* 2004; 19: 336-345.)

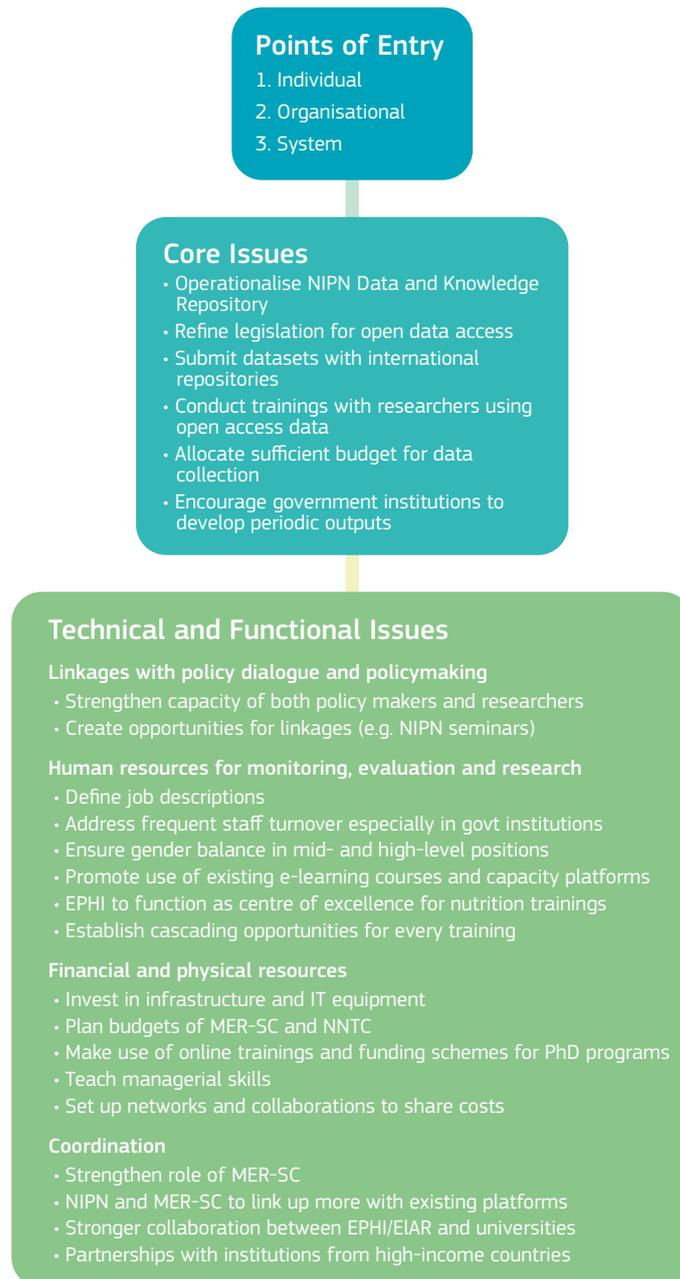
The CNA covered capacities at the systemic, organisational and individual level. Organisations identified through a previous NIPN stakeholder mapping exercise were interviewed to understand capacity needs. The stakeholders and six ministries relevant for the implementation of the NNP II were included in the assessment. The core issues assessed were: (i) data collection and M&E, (ii) strategic policy research, and (iii) data and knowledge management and sharing.

The CNA was conducted jointly by EPHI and IFPRI, in 2018 and 2019, through interviews using multiple questionnaires and review of relevant literature. The findings were analysed and key recommendations (see overleaf) formulated in line with the CNA framework, which were then revised based on the MER-SC's feedback and advice.

The final report was launched in early 2020 and capacity development activities have been implemented with adjustments to the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 and respective government measures.

NIPN plans to conduct additional CNAs as capacity needs evolve and change, and to include sectors that are not actively involved in the planning but should benefit from the capacity development.

CNA key recommendations





A woman selling vegetables in the Saris market.
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Findings

NIPN contributions to multisectoral, multistakeholder coordination and collaboration

Several benefits can be attributed to the inclusion of NIPN in the MER-SC. As the MER-SC is a formal multisectoral committee with roles and responsibilities in support of overall coordination and implementation of national nutrition and food security strategies and programmes, NIPN's products and outputs can be directly communicated to the committee and its members. As a result, NIPN receives increased visibility and the results of its work can be presented and discussed directly with the members and sectors during MER-SC meetings. Because of the contributions of the MER-SC to policy, strategy and programme development in Ethiopia, **NIPN can more easily inform and potentially influence this process, and make specific policy recommendations.**

Likewise, the MER-SC has the opportunity to guide and influence the work of NIPN in line with its needs and objectives. **NIPN products and tools can thus be**

more specifically designed to meet NNP II (and in future FNS) implementation needs and demands, and might therefore be used increasingly by the committee and at national level.

During the interviews it was mentioned that there might still be room for **NIPN to involve other sectors** (e.g. education, finance, labour and social affairs, trade and industry, women, youth and children) **more actively in its future work** to further strengthen multisectoral coordination and collaboration. So far, challenges encountered in strengthening multisectoral engagement may be due to other sectors not being aware of the significance of their role in improving nutrition. NIPN, on the other hand, might have not fully utilised opportunities to reach out, develop relationships and provide proactive advocacy early in the initiative's Phase I implementation.

NIPN contributions to policy and programme development

As mentioned above, the close relationship and direct communication opportunities with members of the MER-SC enable enhanced integration of the NIPN objectives and activities with those of the MER-SC as well as access to national policy, strategy and programme development. The MER-SC and other institutions and bodies, such as the MoH, have asked NIPN to provide technical assistance, conduct studies and support decision-making by generating evidence.

The policy and other briefs that were subsequently developed by NIPN have informed the MER-SC and were utilised in the process of drafting the new FNS.

At the time of writing, NIPN is supporting the Ethiopian Government in organising and implementing a nationwide FNS baseline survey. Its results will be used

to guide and monitor implementation of the FNS.

The NNP II progress analysis conducted by NIPN was used for the design of an M&E framework for the FNS.

The close involvement of NIPN within the MER-SC and its participation in various high-level meetings also enables NIPN to adjust its approach (e.g. PQF process) in line with recommendations and requests to make its outputs more timely, relevant and effective.

Several events organised or supported by NIPN alone or in collaboration with partners, such as webinars, seminars, workshops, etc., have been attended by stakeholders and credited as being valuable for decision making.

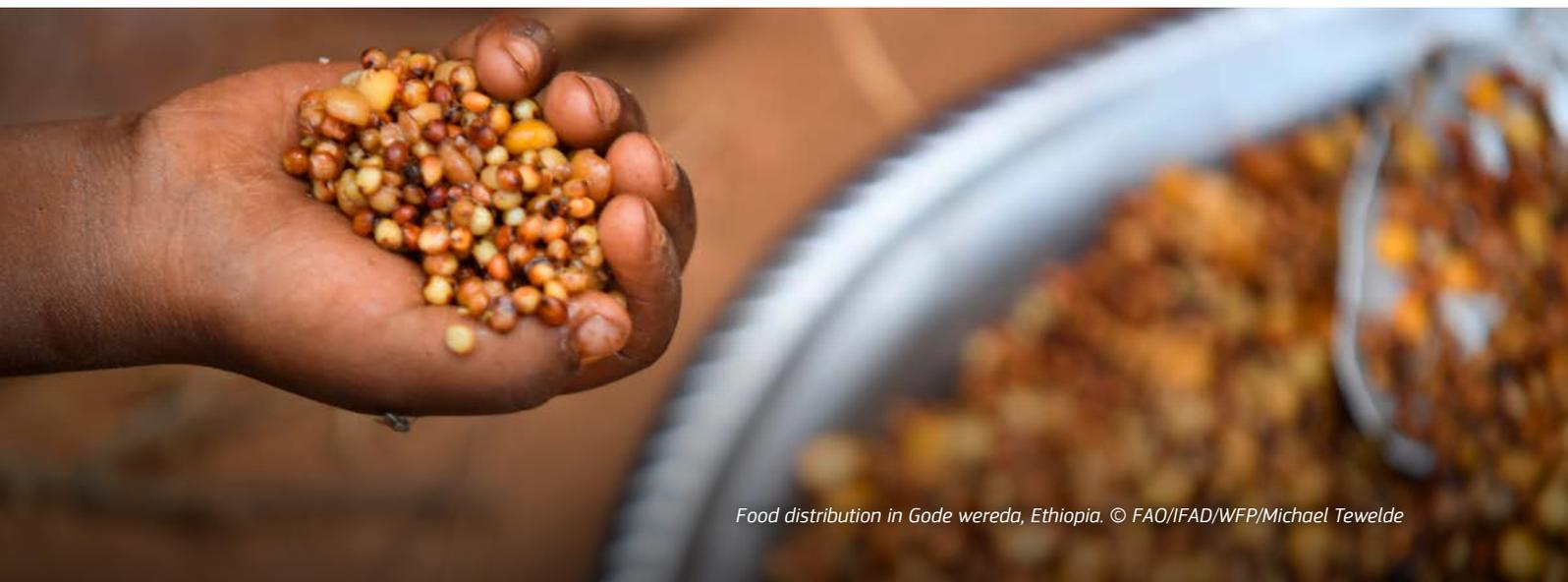
NIPN contributions to capacity development

NIPN in collaboration with IFPRI has provided several capacity development activities in 2020 and 2021, despite the limits to conducting training and other activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated government restrictions. They included training on: data management-related matters, scientific writing, communication of research findings to non-scientific communities and media training, which involved private and public media and ministry public relations officers. Trainings conducted by NIPN in 2020 were replicated in 2021 for other sectors and agencies (Ministry of Water and Energy, Ministry of Agriculture).

The capacity development activities conducted by NIPN were considered very valuable. However, some interviewees (~20%), who were not very actively

involved in NIPN-organised activities or events, were not aware of them. It was mentioned several times during the interviews that NIPN should continue to provide this valuable support to all sectors.

No specific type of capacity development was mentioned as particularly important. However, **all the interviewees proposed additional CNAs and capacity development activities** designed with the closer involvement of other sectors and partners. It was also suggested that NIPN contributions could be even more valuable if training activities focused not only on data management, research, etc., but also included the building or strengthening of basic nutrition capacities in other sectors and at sub-national level.





Students of Gelcha Elementary School, Ethiopia enjoy a break time meal as part of a school feeding program.
© WFP/Michael Tewelde

Discussion of broader lessons

What worked well and what worked not so well?

Interviewees reported that during the setting-up of the NIPN, **relevant sectors and stakeholders should have been better informed about the NIPN's objectives and work** during its design and planning phase. This might have facilitated the participation of other sectors in activities such as data sharing, PQF, etc. Although progress has been made, NIPN could have potentially been more effective, especially in the early stages. Nevertheless, **it might still be valuable for NIPN to strengthen outreach, communication and collaboration with other sectors in addition to health, agriculture and WASH.**

Membership of the MER-SC offers considerable opportunities for NIPN to contribute to broader multisector-multistakeholder coordination in Ethiopia. Although the committee includes most relevant ministries in Ethiopia, a number of them do not actively participate or attend meetings. This may be due to a lack of understanding about the relevance and importance of their cooperation and contributions to reduce malnutrition, and about the potential benefits that improved nutrition has for the work and the objectives of their own sector. **To improve this situation, more high-level advocacy, supported by NIPN, may be required.**

The EPHI (and thus also NIPN) and the EIAR, as the chairs of the MER-SC, are institutions within the MoH and the Ministry of Agriculture. It might be more challenging for these institutions to convene and chair a multisectoral committee as they belong to line ministries, whereby other ministries might feel that they are at the same administrative level and thus could be reluctant to

be part of the MER-SC. This experience is common in many countries and may require a supra-ministerial institution or agency, for example a national planning commission, to be assigned the role of chair.

The greater visibility of NIPN products due to its membership in the MER-SC may also result in increasing requests from stakeholders to support events or produce specific deliverables. Interest from government and other stakeholders in NIPN's work also shows their appreciation of the value of NIPN and its functions. While there is a perceived greater sense of ownership of the initiative at the national level, which could increase NIPN's long-term sustainability, it is difficult to predict at this stage if planning for additional staff positions will increasingly be funded by government budgets in future.

Although interviewees from different sectors and institutions agreed on an increased sense of ownership of the NIPN's work, there appears to be no agreement as yet on how they might also take responsibility and ownership for aspects of the multisectoral NIPN work.

As NIPN is part of a government institution, namely the EPHI, it is also assumed that this increases the likelihood that future resources will be allocated to support its continuation.

Despite a growing level of acceptance and appreciation of NIPN's work, significant administrative processes will still be necessary when external funding comes to an end to enable budget approval, role creation, etc. to ensure long-term sustainability.



*A woman washing her hands in Kebele, Benishangul Gumuz
© UNICEF/UN0158452/Tadesse*

Recommendations

The following recommendations may be of value to other countries.

NIPN contributions to multisector, multistakeholder coordination and collaboration

1. Wherever possible, NIPN should be integrated in high-level existing multisector-multistakeholder coordination platforms, because this makes it easier and more likely to inform and influence policies, strategies and programmes.
2. NIPN should strive to invite all relevant sectors and stakeholders to events such as webinars, seminars, workshops, trainings, etc., as this will contribute to the strengthening of multisectoral coordination and collaboration.
3. NIPN should **more pro-actively reach out** to other sectors and involve them in its work and not only to participate in events. This could be done through additional outreach, advocacy and the continued building of relationships and trust with those sectors, especially considering NIPN Phase II.

NIPN contributions to policy and programme development

1. NIPN should shorten the implementation timeframe for activities and outputs to enable them to remain relevant and be used for the development of policies and programmes. This applies specifically to the process of identifying relevant policy questions and the subsequent provision of evidence.
2. NIPN should ensure that **evidence generated is promoted and used for planning and implementing genuine nutrition interventions** and not only for discussions in academic circles and for the production of scientific papers.

NIPN contributions to capacity development

1. CNA and capacity development activities should more widely target other sectors.
2. Capacity development activities should not only be limited to NIPN's focus areas: data management and policy development. Other and broader training activities, e.g. basics of nutrition, could be of great value to accommodate the enormous capacity needs in other sectors.

Annex 1: Stakeholders interviewed

NO.	ORGANISATION	NAME
1	MoA	Alemtsehay Sergawi
2	Nutrition Program Management Steering Committee	Birara Melese
3	MoWE	Ato Abiy Girma
4	MoH/SUN FP	Dr. Ferew Lemma
5	MoH/NNP management SC	1) Hiwot Darsene 2) Abera Dibabe
6	MER SC	Dr. Masresha Tessema
7	EIAR	Dr. Kassaye Tolassa
8	Seqota Declaration	Dr. Sisay Sinamo
9	IFPRI	Cornelia Van Zyl
10	EU Delegation	Pierre-Luc VANHAEVERBEKE
11	NIPN	1) Dr. Aregash Samuel 2) Dr. Meron Girma 3) Hassina Ousman
12	WFP/Nutrition Development Forum Partner representative	Dr. Filippo Dibari
13	UNICEF	Dr. Arnaud Laillou

Annex 2: Literature reviewed

1. Terms of Reference for the Monitoring Evaluation and Research (MER) Steering Committee of the National Nutrition Program. October 2018.
2. The Ethiopian National Information Platform for Nutrition, Advisory Committee Terms of Reference. July 2019.
3. Capacity needs assessment for nutrition monitoring, evaluation and policy research in Ethiopia. NIPN Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, January 2020.
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6. Nutrition Data Mapping for Ethiopia: Assessment of the Availability and Accessibility of Nutrition-Related Data. NIPN Ethiopia, February 2021.
7. Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Policy and Programme Design, Coordination and Implementation in Ethiopia Seife Ayele, Elias Asfaw Zegeye and Nicholas Nisbett. Institute of Development Studies 2020 ISBN: 978-1-78118-621-3
8. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan for the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) in Ethiopia. NIPN Ethiopia, February 2021.
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15. Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER SC). Minutes of the meeting held on March 30-31, 2021.
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Annex 3: Comparison of institutional roles of committees

The advisory roles of both committees are complementary. Together, they support that NIPN responds to an actual need.

Key NIPN operational elements	Dedicated NIPN Advisory Committee	National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee
Overall focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on policy level and strategic guidance • Linkages with high level decision makers • Selected group of key influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational focus: provides guidance on implementation • Ensures a link between NIPN and a representative group of multisectoral stakeholders involved in the national monitoring, evaluation and research for nutrition • Wide set of monitoring, evaluation and research stakeholders
NIPN planning, monitoring and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures linkages of NIPN with the highest level of decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that there is no duplication of efforts with other initiatives • Discusses progress of NIPN during each of its meetings and provides guidance to ensure efficient implementation of the NIPN operational cycle • Facilitates multisectoral involvement during the NIPN operational cycle • Ensures linkages of NIPN with the national nutrition agenda (Policy and NNP) and other initiatives on nutrition data (including UNISE)
Policy question formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orients broad policy demand • Validates the policy questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to capturing the policy demand during the policy question formulation process • Advises NIPN to ensure that the timeframe to answer questions aligns to the needs of the policy cycle
Identification and access to data, necessary to respond this policy question	<p>Provides overall guidance on how NIPN can reinforce the principles of sharing and using data for nutrition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the practical establishment of a national nutrition data repository within EPHI • Addresses bottlenecks, facilitates access to data, report and information from various government institutions and other stakeholders
Analysis and interpretation of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validates conclusions and key messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports interpretation of NIPN findings • Facilitates access to expertise across sectors for analysis/interpretation of data • Supports the formulation of key messages
Communication and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates high level uptake of key messages by decision makers and NNCB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the uptake of key messages • Supports the dissemination of NIPN outputs • Ensures that the NIPN outputs are on the agenda of MeNC

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