

## Summary notes of NIPN Webinar - September 2022

### “Engaging with academia: experiences from Laos PDR, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso”

#### Q&A Part I:

- I) *How do you manage the financial constriction to strengthening activities of academia? In Ethiopia they are having issues because resources are limited but at the same time there is a high expectation from academia*

Becoming part of a platform where research institutes, universities, NGOs, UN agencies and other members meet, enables synergies to be created at both operational and financial levels. In particular, through involvement with different organisations, research institutes can become aware of available funding of which they were not previously aware of. Being a member of the platform enabled also easier coordination of available resources.

- II) *Can you quantify the impact of symposiums that bring together academia’s researchers?*

There are no quantitative measures of impact of scientific conferences, normally they are very high-level sophisticated and scientific that makes it hard for practitioner to translate the message into a concrete action. Overtime, meeting together in a platform create the link between researchers and practitioners to understand better and to better utilise the content of symposiums discussions, allowing a shift from very scientific topics to a more practical application of research.

However, at the time when Ingo was part of the academia platform in Nepal there was not an M&E indicator evaluating the impact of symposiums and conference.

- III) *How sustainable are these platforms? Will they continue if for example NIPN phases out?*

It has been pointed out that the Nepal platform has benefitted from a coordination facilitation unit (prepare agenda, support meeting, and facilitate them), but it was very important that this unit was taking care of preparations, location, taking minutes and follow-up after the meeting with the other stakeholders. So, having someone who follow-up is crucial to guarantee the long-term sustainability. NIPN could do this for a define timelapse, but in the long-term it would have to be a Government housed coordination facilitation unit operating with government funding. Without such a support unit and there won’t be any follow-up after the meetings the sustainability of the platforms could be jeopardized.

- IV) *Beyond the shared commitment to generating evidence and advancing research, were there unmet expectations and how were they managed?*

First, there were so many surprising positive outcomes that create a high enthusiasm, there may be some institutions expecting to get more funding, but he was explained that the platform role was to bring together different stakeholders, and this may have brought some funding opportunities, but it was not guaranteed. They also tried to be inclusive and enable small institution to be actively involved in this process.

- V) Question for LAO PDR: *What you described seems to be more bilateral ad hoc engagement, it is any plan to establish academia's platform has a regular meeting that will also involve other stakeholders?*

Engagement with academia is very recent for LAO PDR and there is a greater opportunity to engage more and make it more systematically, unfortunately in LAO PDR there is not the SUN academia network. They aspire to have such a platform in LAO PDR, and they are using the current academia network as an entry point to establish a more formally SUN academia network that would bring together more stakeholders.

- VI) Question for ET: *SUN academia networks do also involve development partners (NGOs...) or is it more limited to research institute? You described one of the challenges that academia expects funding...one of the advantages of having established platforms that involve different partners, including NGOs could be engage some development partner which could have budget for research of funding some activities.*

So far is only universities and research institute but they will revise the membership and they are going to engage partner. On their ToR they reported to revise the partnership yearly.

- VII) Raising number of academia's platform (SUN, Universities...)... as part of our plan to increase engagement of academical institution on the M&E we have established a research group we are in early stage, but an early challenge that is coming up is the huge conflict of interest, all of them want to generate evidence, do you came across this problem in Nepal and if yes, how do you manage it?

in Nepal we identified common interest because there may be some competition between research institution for funding but we wanted to make sure that there was a common goal and that is why it was important to have UN agencies, NGOs, policymakers, to leverage the competitive part of support a joint identification of research topics and to use the platform to point out the need to give to different stakeholders the opportunity to be involved, to enable to NGOs, UN, to provide funding for studies to really support all the institutions. This was the task of the coordination facility unity to create a collaborative environment between the organization of the civil society.

- VIII) What is the link between the NEPAL platform and NIPN in general?

Nepal is totally independent from NIPN, it is a working experience of Ingo when he was working of NEPAL, it is also worth knowing that the Academia platform was not only for academics but also for NGOs, research organizations, and individuals, The aim was to ensure the connection between research and results to ensure that the research is not only used to answer the research question but also to solve practical problems

- IX) Given that academia is much more theoretical and has its own research process and academic requirements, how were they able to be engaged and what is their involvement in the project?

There are a lot of actors who do studies and there are also a lot of studies that are done. Moreover, these organizations have resources allocated to do these studies. So, the interest here is to make sure that these studies are not only used for academic purposes which are usually disconnected from the multi-sectoral plan for nutrition but to have the different actors together with the plan to align the research projects with the multi-sectoral plan for nutrition.

One of the advantages is to have more collaborative studies and to use the results of these studies to help solve nutrition-related problems.

X) **What are the prospects for collaboration with the NRF?**

This is a very good question and suggestion. We think there could be potential opportunities for collaboration and/or exchange with NRF research when it takes place in NIPN countries. We will seek to get an overview of ongoing activities from our colleagues at C4N who work more closely with NRF.

**Contribution:** being a new graduate, the initiative is very interesting for students as well as researchers because she thinks that any researcher would like to see their work or research results used to solve a real problem in practice.

### **Niger's contribution**

Niger has involved the universities extensively in the formulation of the modules and in the conduct of the information. They have set up a training course called Nutral-pro, and there are currently 14 students following this course, the aim of which is to provide professionals with the knowledge to better understand nutrition issues. Two scholarships have also been funded. So, the training lasts for one year and it is entirely financed by PININ.

### **Contribution of Cote D'Ivoire**

The C.I. also collaborated with the universities, especially in the analysis phase. They have been asked to assist in the analysis phase but also for research.

Three research topics are currently funded by PININ and are receiving assistance from the researchers