

# Developing the NIPN structure

The first guidance note of this section, **Setting up National Information Platform for Nutrition in a Country**, describes a number of important steps and criteria to take into account during the preparation phase of a NIPN platform at country level:

- Is a country ready for NIPN?
- Which structures can become NIPN actors?
- What are the risks and potential mitigation measures?
- What are the first activities to initiate NIPN?

The second note provides guidance and country experiences in **Setting up a Multisectoral Advisory Committee (MAC)**. The MAC provides a high-level and strategic link to the existing multisectoral nutrition coordination system and plays a key role in several steps of the NIPN operational cycle.

(Watch the [webinar on Setting up a Multisectoral Advisory Committee](#) - 19/12/2018 - 45 min.)

The third guidance note aims to identify the scope of capacities required for effective implementation of NIPN at country level, to provide guidance on how to assess existing capacity to implement a NIPN in country and identify gaps, and to support the preparation of a country **NIPN Capacity Development Plan**.

(Watch the [webinar on NIPN capacity development](#) - 19/03/2019 - 35 min.)

The fourth guidance note is about **stimulating the engagement and the collaboration of sectoral ministries** in the NIPN approach. (Watch the [webinar on engaging sectors](#) - 21/11/2019 - 70 min.)

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## 1 - Setting up NIPN in a country

### 1.1 - National demand and readiness for the NIPN approach

Between 2016 and 2018, within the framework of an EU-led initiative, eight countries have made progress in setting up a National Information Platform for Nutrition.

Lessons learnt from the experience of these countries could be of interest to others considering the adoption of a similar approach, especially those among the more than 60 member countries of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, which are already committed to the development of an evidence-based multisectoral approach to improving nutrition.

**This guidance note covers important issues to address during the preparation phase prior to setting up a NIPN, during inception and early stages of implementation:**

- Core principles and pre-conditions
- Scoping
- Advocacy and awareness raising
- Institutional arrangements
- Resources
- Risk assessment and mitigation plan
- NIPN work plan and progress monitoring

A mid-term review of the EU-led NIPN initiative carried out in 2018 provided valuable insights and recommendations which have been incorporated into this guidance note.

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## 1.2 - Core principles and pre-conditions

One of the core principles of the NIPN approach is that it **builds on existing structures, institutions and processes and adds value to existing initiatives** by compiling existing information from multiple sectors and producing in-house data analysis in response to a country's needs and demand.

When planning to set up a NIPN in a country, **a number of pre-existing conditions are thus critical to consider**, as they influence the longer-term sustainability of the platform.

These include:

- **Existing government and stakeholders' dynamic around multisectoral approaches to nutrition**, reflected by the existence of a multisectoral nutrition strategy, plan and coordination structure.
- **Demand for a strengthened information system**, and better use of available data and information at (sub-)national level, even if currently underutilised (a first light assessment might be useful – additional guidance on how to conduct a data landscape exercise is provided in [section 3.1](#)).
- **Presence of other data initiatives in country** in order to establish what the added value of a NIPN could be and to avoid duplication of efforts.

A scoping exercise can be useful for assessing the pre-existing conditions for a NIPN ([see text box below](#)).

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### How to assess country readiness for a NIPN

Pre-existing conditions can be initially assessed in a scoping mission through a combination of desk review, individual interviews with key stakeholders and focus group discussions.

- **Documents to be reviewed include:** national development strategy and plan, sectoral strategy and policy documents and action plans, specific nutrition-relevant programme documents, stakeholder mappings and online data portals.
- **Key organisations to consult include:** inter-ministerial coordination bodies for nutrition; ministries relevant to nutrition (e.g. health, agriculture, water and sanitation, education, planning and finance, social welfare and protection); the national statistics office, academic institutions and other institutions providing data analysis capacity to government departments; main donors, UN agencies and civil society organisations in country.

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### 1.3 - Advocacy and awareness raising for the added value of a NIPN (1/2)

**The objective and added value of a National Information Platform for Nutrition** might not be immediately obvious to all partners, stakeholders and sectors. From the start, it is imperative to present the added value of a NIPN, which aims to strengthen ongoing initiatives (e.g. tracking progress of the country's Multisectoral Nutrition Plan of Action), is embedded in existing local structures, and is complementary to support provided by others in the SUN Movement.

**The added value and feasibility of establishing a NIPN needs to be clarified with the stakeholders at the political level as well as the technical level.** At the technical level, there are several organisations involved bringing a diverse set of expertise related to policy development and data analysis. At the political level, decision makers are involved who represent various sectors and line ministries as well as those who represent higher decision making levels such as the Prime Minister's Office or President's Office.

In order to overcome challenges related to collaboration and joint accountability, it is of utmost importance to build a sense of common understanding and common objectives, and shared ownership and shared benefit amongst all participating sector ministries and sub-national institutions.

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The added value of a NIPN

The added value of a NIPN lies in the creation of a continuous dialogue between policy experts and data analysts:

- to formulate and prioritise nutrition policy-relevant questions;
- to analyse existing but underutilised national and sub-national quantitative data;
- to communicate actionable recommendations for policy decisions.

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### 1.4 - Advocacy and awareness raising for the added value of a NIPN (2/2)

**Continuous advocacy and awareness raising efforts are therefore needed**, in combination with the delivery of relevant outputs, to establish NIPN credibility and authority.

Rather than being an ad hoc, one-time activity, this requires careful planning, seizing strategic windows of opportunity, using multiple communication channels (individual meetings, group discussions, workshops, presentations at high-level events), as well as repetition of a few, carefully formulated key messages.

**Key messages** should relate to the following questions (amongst others):

- Why invest in nutrition?
- Why is a multisectoral approach to nutrition required?
- Why should data analysis guide policy, programme and budget decisions?

- What is the NIPN approach and how does it complement existing multisectoral nutrition structures and approaches as well as other nutrition data related initiatives?
- Why should my sector/department/ministry be concerned with NIPN?

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### Examples of presentation to adapt

The Global Support Facility has developed two generic presentations, which countries might find useful to use and adapt to their own context:

- [The first presentation](#) addresses the questions: ‘Why should a country invest in nutrition?’ and ‘Why does nutrition require a multisectoral approach?’
- [The second presentation](#) focuses on the need for data analysis to inform policy decisions and explains what NIPN is.

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## 1.5 - Institutional arrangements (1/3)

**Setting up a National Information Platform for Nutrition is a collaborative process.** The time necessary for consultation and consensus building should not be underestimated: it is important to take sufficient time to hold meetings, formulate and adapt the description of the approach, and establish a shared vision between the multiple institutions involved. When country processes are participatory and thorough, the final set-up is more likely to have the full buy-in and commitment of all stakeholders, which provides an enabling environment for implementation of the NIPN approach. This process may require external facilitation and resourcing.

The idea of setting up a platform is not to create a new organisation or structure, but to embed the various NIPN functions within existing organisations while strengthening their capacity to fulfil these functions. While acknowledging that there are many time and capacity restraints, it is recommended that staff of the NIPN host organisations are enabled to take on NIPN tasks as part of their normal way of working, and the number of staff hired on the project budget should be limited (**this section, page 8**).

The NIPN core structure relies on two components: (1) a **policy component** and (2) a **data component**. Both of them play key roles in implementing the NIPN operational cycle as presented in the **introduction section**:

- **Formulating nutrition policy question** for analysis based on government priorities;
- **Managing and analysing data** to inform the questions;
- **Communicating and disseminating the findings** to policy makers.

The policy and data components of a NIPN are supported by a **Multisectoral Advisory Committee (MAC)**, which at country level may be called a ‘Steering Committee’ or ‘Policy Advisory Committee’ (**section 1.2**).

**Multiple organisations with different strengths may thus be involved in NIPN** and suitable institutional arrangements need to be put in place to ensure effective and efficient collaboration. A careful choice of institutions is key to reduce the risk of competition or lack of coordination.

**Formalising the institutional arrangements** which are adopted for the NIPN (for example in a contract or a Memorandum of Understanding) will help to clearly define roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms, and as such avoid a lack of coordination and the duplication of efforts.

**Other stakeholders**, such as sectoral ministries, academic institutions or international organisations, including SUN networks, will provide support in the sub-steps of the NIPN operational cycle to ensure policy relevance of the questions and to contribute to data analyses and capacity development of NIPN actors.

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## 1.6 - Institutional arrangements (2/3)

### **Features of the policy component**

The identification of a host organisation for the policy component of NIPN is a key success factor of the NIPN. Preferably this organisation receives high-level political support, is mandated to coordinate the multisectoral nutrition system and is in demand of strategic information.

Often the mandate or responsibility for nutrition is spread over a number of institutions, which makes strong coordination and a cross-sectoral mandate even more important.

In numerous countries, the main coordinating body for nutrition activities is housed in an institution with cross-sectoral mandates, such as the Office of the President or the Prime Minister, a National Nutrition Council or a Ministry of Planning and Development. If this is not the case, explicit high-level political sponsorship may need to be obtained.

The importance of the NIPN strategic lead institution having a specific mandate for multisectoral nutrition coordination is especially evident where it translates into a higher degree of ownership of the NIPN operational cycle of questions, analysis and communication of findings.

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#### Potential pitfalls

High-level political support is necessary, but can also become a risk when political leadership changes. Yet political will and country ownership go hand in hand, and country ownership is one of the core principles of NIPN. Continuous advocacy and awareness raising of multisectoral nutrition and the role of NIPN is necessary to establish support across a broad political platform.

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## 1.7 - Institutional arrangements (3/3)

### Features of the data component

The data component of the NIPN might be best hosted by an agency which already has a mandate and the capacity for data management and/or analysis, if possible with a cross-sectoral mandate. A national bureau of statistics or a planning agency is potentially an appropriate host organisation if willing to build its capacity in the analysis of nutrition-related data, so that this becomes part of the routine work of the institution.

It is key to identify an agency that has a mandate for socio-economic analyses, is geared towards responsive analysis using multiple data sources, has some convening power, and has the ability to access data of other data providers.

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#### Potential pitfalls

- Statistics bodies are not necessarily mandated to do socio-economic analyses, and in some cases their mandate is limited to the collection and management of the data but does not include data analysis and influencing.
- If the following characteristics of a statistics agency's mandate and practice are present, this organisation may not be the most suitable to lead the data component of NIPN:
  - They are unwilling or hesitant to consider data that they do not collect themselves or cannot vet;
  - They are not able to access data managed by other data providers;
  - They are geared towards providing routine analysis products, taking long time lapses due to extensive processes to validate and process data;
  - They are not equipped to undertake nimble work to answer current ad hoc questions that require answers in time for policy and programme decisions.

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#### Examples of host organisations

Country	Host of policy component	Host of data component
Burkina Faso	Nutrition Secretariat under the Ministry of Health	National Statistics Institute
Côte d'Ivoire	National Nutrition Council under the President's Office	Secretariat of the National Nutrition Council
Lao PDR	Ministry of Planning and Investment	National Institute for Economic Research
Niger	High Commission for the 3N Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security under the President's Office	National Statistics Institute
Uganda	Nutrition Secretariat under the Prime Minister's Office	Uganda Bureau of Statistics

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## 1.8 - NIPN core team

The first step is to have the teams in place, as without the 'hands and feet' of the initiative, no action or implementation is possible.

A wide range of expertise is needed to implement a NIPN: policy development and analysis; socio-economic analysis; public health nutrition; data management; statistical analysis; convening, negotiation and facilitation; knowledge management and learning; and administrative and financial management.

As much as possible, existing staff of the NIPN host organisations must have time freed up to take on NIPN tasks as part of their job description, enabled by project allowances. In addition, a number of project-based positions may need to be created in order to ensure efficient implementation. This may especially be true for the coordination and management role. Strong leadership and coordination is required to ensure the various host organisations implement the NIPN approach in an efficient and timely manner, with appropriate sequencing of activities and a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the various host institutions and individuals involved.

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### Potential pitfalls

In some countries, a high-level individual may be appointed to lead a NIPN, but in practice this person will be too busy to take care of the day-to-day management of a NIPN. This role then needs to be delegated to another project officer who has been appointed to this effect, such as a NIPN coordinator.

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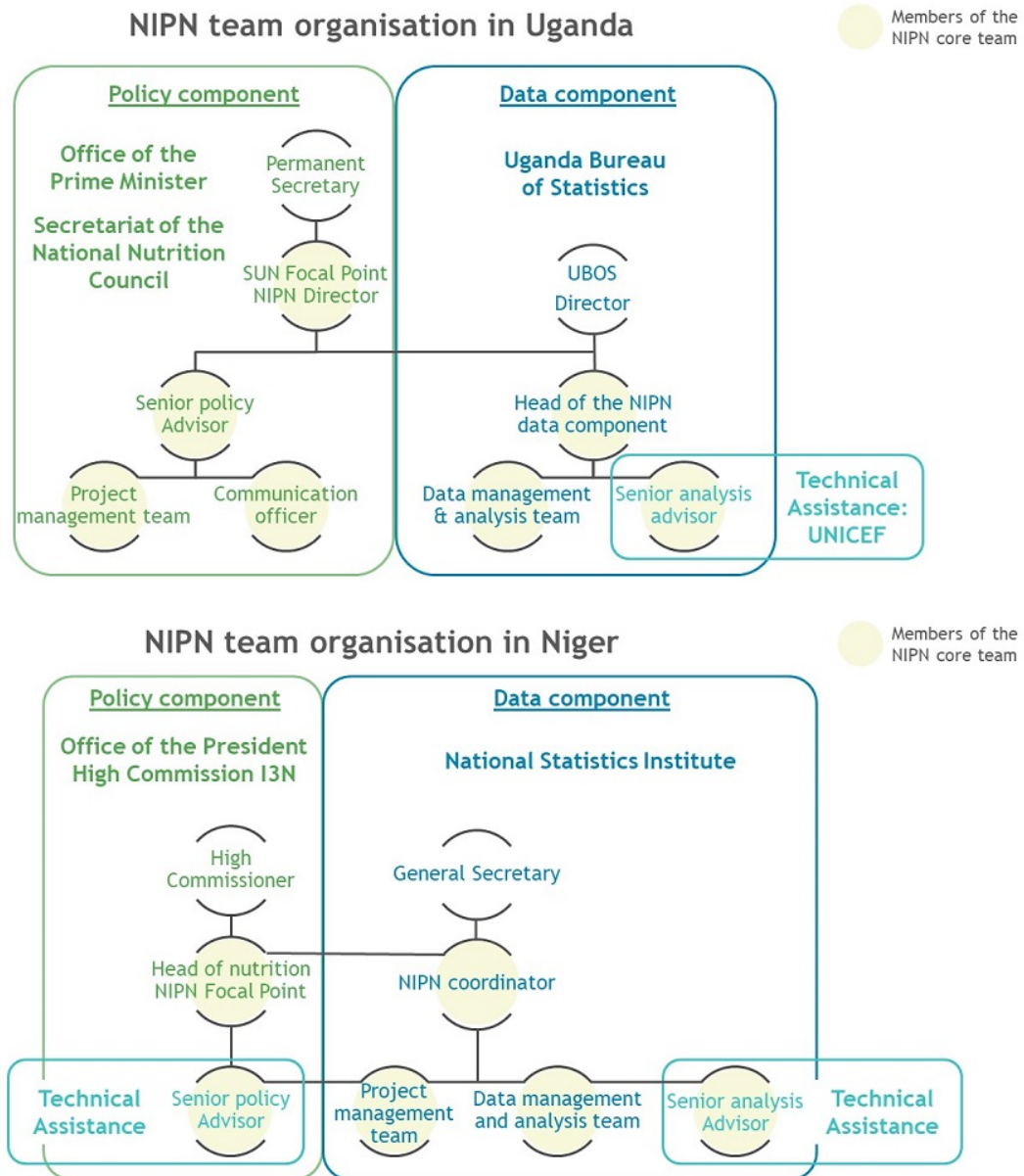
In general, NIPN implementation requires a full-time coordinator who is

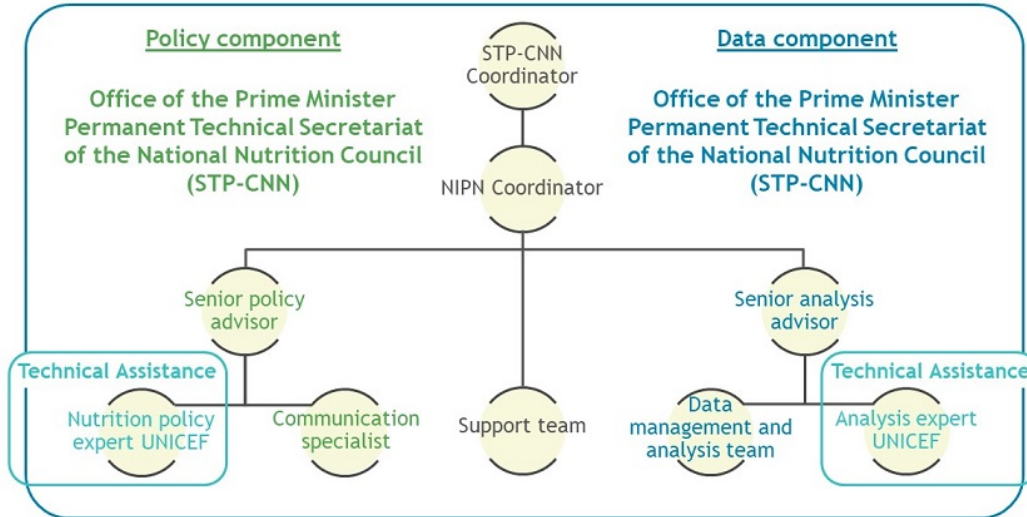
responsible for monitoring progress and who will hold the other NIPN actors accountable for the delivery of activities as per the work plan. She or he will also be responsible for continuous risk assessment and the development of a mitigation plan. Part-time support provided to the coordinator could include administrative assistance, financial management and communications.

Examples of organisational structures of country NIPN teams are provided below.

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### Examples of NIPN organisational structures





## 1.9 - Resources for a NIPN

### Capacity strengthening

In the first phases of NIPN, there is a strong need to strengthen the capacity of institutions and individuals to implement the NIPN operational cycle. Specific modalities and dedicated resources for strengthening existing capacity need to be defined. Guidance on how to assess capacity gaps and develop a specific NIPN capacity building plan is provided in [section 1.3](#).

One of the modalities for strengthening capacity is the recruitment of full-time or part-time technical assistants embedded within NIPN policy and data components.

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### Financial resources

Each country requires dedicated investment for setting up a NIPN, therefore specific financial resources to support this process must be identified. A detailed budget should be prepared and agreed by the partner organisations.

In the framework of the EU-led NIPN initiative, the countries benefited from financial support from the European Union, the UK Department for International Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. A typical NIPN budget for these countries was around 3 million euros for a three to four year period, to support project staff, advocacy and awareness raising, capacity building, hardware and software investments, as well as technical assistance at country level. The donors have also funded a global support facility providing technical support to all NIPN countries.

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## 1.10 - Risk assessment and mitigation plan

As with any new approach, there are multiple risks at the technical, political, and process level, that may impede or delay the successful implementation of the NIPN, and ultimately its impact on improved nutrition policy, programme and investment decision making.

While it is important to assess the potential risks and their likelihood during the planning phase, and to define sound mitigation measures, it is equally important to put in place a robust mechanism for ongoing joint risk assessment and active mitigation between partners during NIPN implementation to avoid delays and ensure progress as planned.

The likelihood of risks materialising may vary greatly from one country to another. It is important to carry out a realistic assessment of the weight of each risk and of the measures that can be put in place to reduce such risks.

The table below provides examples of the risks that have been identified during the mid-term review of the EU-funded NIPN initiative.

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### Risk matrix

Risks during the set-up phase	Likelihood
Complexity and number of initiatives and actors in the nutrition field	high
Lack of ownership of NIPN by host organizations	medium
NIPN host does not allocate/free up staff to work on NIPN	medium
Risks related to the policy component	Likelihood
Multisectoral engagement is deficient, including poor attendance of MAC meetings	low
Low or non-sustained demand for NIPN outputs from decision makers	medium
Policy and decision makers do not accept the data and evidence provided	high
Risks related to the data component	Likelihood
Lack of willingness to share data with NIPN	high
Poor data availability and/or quality	high
Low incentives for or barriers to collaboration between NIPN partners	high

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### Examples of mitigation measures

### Examples of mitigation measures related to the risks identified

Risks during the set-up phase and related possible mitigation measures
<b>Risk: Complexity and number of initiatives and actors in the nutrition field</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a mapping of all actors and consult all stakeholders during the setting up phase of a NIPN with regard to choice of host organizations.</li> <li>• Position the NIPN as embedded within and supporting the multisectoral nutrition policy environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk: Lack of ownership of NIPN by host organizations</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully select the partners to be part of the initiative and define clear roles and responsibilities and accountability lines in a contract or Memorandum of Understanding.</li> <li>• Ensure that each partner understands how the NIPN can work in their country and can respond to their objectives and priorities. NIPN should feed into the larger strategy of each partner.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk: NIPN host does not allocate/free up staff to work on NIPN</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure realistic estimates of time allocation of staff of host organizations are agreed upon and bound through a contractual commitment and covered by allowances.</li> <li>• Include a budget for dedicated project management tasks which cannot be absorbed by existing staff: coordination, financial and admin support, and communication.</li> </ul>

Risks related to the policy component
<b>Risk: Multisectoral engagement is deficient, including poor attendance of MAC meetings</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the NIPN set-up phase to discuss engagement and emphasize benefits for all sectors.</li> <li>• Develop incentive schemes and provide meeting allowances.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk: Low or non-sustained demand for NIPN outputs from decision makers</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Advisory Committee which is directly linked to the Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination System to engage their colleagues.</li> <li>• Use the Sub-national Nutrition Dashboard to raise interest and start the policy dialogue.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk: Policy and decision makers do not accept the data and evidence provided</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve policy makers and decision makers throughout the policy dialogue to create ownership of question formulation, choice of data analysis and finally participation in discussion around interpretation of the results.</li> <li>• Transparency in communication of findings and encouraging other stakeholders to hold policy decision makers accountable for accepting and using evidence.</li> </ul>

Risks related to the data component
<b>Risk: Lack of willingness to share data with NIPN</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness at the highest level of the Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination System about the importance of data sharing.</li> <li>• Advocate for the establishment of an enabling legislative framework.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk: Poor data availability and/or quality</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build capacity of staff in performing data quality checks.</li> <li>• Raise awareness regarding measures to improve the quality of future data collection.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk: Low incentives for or barriers to collaboration between NIPN partners</b>
<b>Possible mitigation measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed NIPN in existing structures from the start, with leadership in the national multisectoral nutrition coordination system.</li> <li>• Demonstrate benefits, efficiency and effectiveness of the NIPN approach through quick, strategic wins in the first year.</li> </ul>

## 1.11 - NIPN work plan and progress monitoring

The early months of the National Information Platform for Nutrition are critical for building relationships with sector ministries, solving institutional and technical issues and developing work plans. A fundamental first step is to **develop an initial, realistic and detailed work plan** for all partner organisations combined,

which takes potential risks and delays into account. A detailed work plan will contain for each detailed activity, a set of milestones, deliverables, resources required, and performance indicators to measure progress of each activity.

The **implementation of the work plan must be managed and monitored by the coordinator**, who may also have to hold individual staff or organisations accountable for their performance. Progress is to be continuously monitored (on a monthly basis) against the proposed work plan, milestones, deliverables, indicators and budget plan, using adequate monitoring tools. Delays or changes in the plan need to be discussed with regard to the consequences for the deliverables of NIPN and to agree possible mitigation measures. Monthly progress monitoring meetings are an excellent tool to hold all NIPN actors accountable for their respective deliverables, roles and responsibilities.

A **Project Steering Committee**, or in its absence the Multisectoral Advisory Committee, may play a role in support of the NIPN coordinator and review NIPN progress on a regular basis, analyse the causes of potential delays or blockages, make decisions on how to overcome any major difficulties encountered, assess emerging risks and contribute to mitigation measure that would be needed, in line with the terms of the contract.

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#### Examples of initial activities to get going

Though the implementing modalities of NIPN are flexible and adaptable to each country's situation and specific objectives, a number of activities are proposed to execute in the early implementation stage. These steps, described throughout the guidance notes, will lay the building stones to the NIPN operational cycle and create the capacity to do so:

- Advocacy and awareness raising (**this section, pages 3-4**)
- Data landscape exercise (**section 3.1**)
- Nutrition Policy review (**section 2.2**)
- Capacity needs assessment (**section 1.3**)

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#### Country case study

### **Experience of NIPN management in Guatemala**

In Guatemala, a Steering Committee provides clarity and transparency on plans and arrangements to the main NIPN partners. It comprises representatives of the EU Delegation, as the main donor supporting the NIPN; the Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security (SESAN), as the government host for the NIPN; and CATIE (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza), as the organisation managing the grant and providing technical assistance.

The Steering Committee meets regularly (three times a year), meetings are

well attended and comprise in-depth discussions on progress, barriers to progress and how to overcome them.

CATIE has assigned an experienced coordinator, an assistant and a financial administrator to manage NIPN. The CATIE team meets weekly to discuss progress and issues and are in regular (daily) contact with the government's NIPN host, SESAN, about project implementation.

CATIE has developed an elaborate project management tool in Excel, which tracks goals, activities and spending, with a simple traffic light system to signal progress or issues to the Project Steering Committee.

Download the [Excel project monitoring template](#) from CATIE.

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## 2 - Setting up a Multisectoral Advisory Committee

### 2.1 - Functions of the NIPN Multisectoral Advisory Committee

To be effective, the National Information Platforms for Nutrition should in principle be an integral part of the existing multisectoral nutrition system at national level. This can be facilitated by creating the NIPN **Multisectoral Advisory Committee** (MAC) as the formal structure connecting NIPN to the national multisectoral and multistakeholder nutrition coordination system.

As shown in the visual below, the MAC links the NIPN country team with national stakeholders and decision makers, and plays a critical role at the different stages of the NIPN operational cycle.

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#### **The MAC has the following functions:**

- **Guidance** and advice as it orients the NIPN activities and workstream
- **Facilitation** to mobilise inputs (data or technical expertise)
- **Validation**
- **Dissemination** and communication

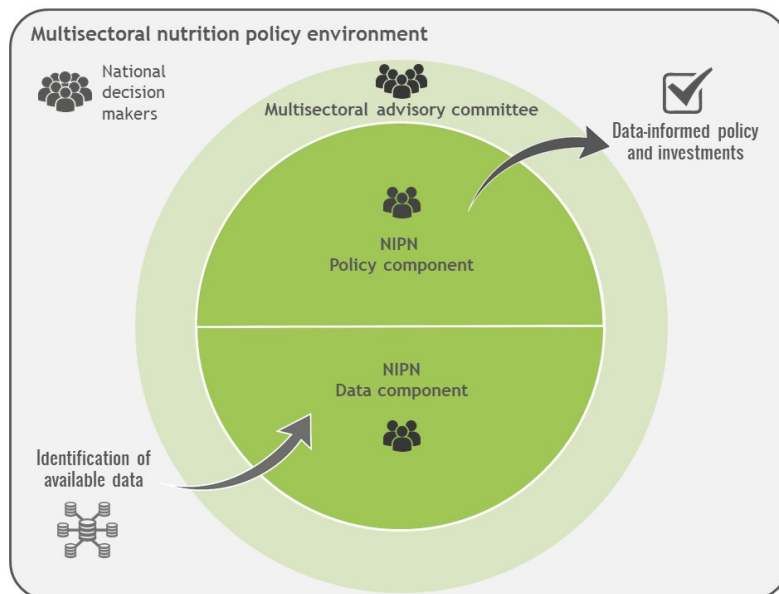
Throughout the NIPN operational cycle, the MAC contributes to a clear and regular two-way information flow between the NIPN team and the national stakeholders and decision makers.

It is a critical element of the NIPN structure, which stimulates and contributes to policy dialogue at national and - where appropriate - sub-national level.

Ideally, the MAC is formalised through a government-approved mandate or decree to ensure leverage and to mobilise the decision-making power of higher level national multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination structures in nutrition ([see the Guatemala case study in this section](#),

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The MAC links the NIPN with the broader multisectoral nutrition policy environment



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## 2.2 - Embedding the MAC in existing multisectoral nutrition structures

In most countries, particularly those that have signed up to join the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, multisectoral coordination mechanisms for nutrition are in place and functional. These are typically structures with membership from all nutrition-relevant ministries such as health, agriculture, gender, water, and planning among others. In certain countries this structure falls under the highest political level such as the President's or Vice President's Office and in others the coordination falls under a particular ministry.

In most countries these coordination structures are established at national level. In some countries they are also being established at sub-national level. If coordination at the sub-national level is in place, a Multisectoral Advisory Committee (MAC) can also be established at the sub-national level ([see the Guatemala case study in this section, page 9](#)).

Embedding a MAC in existing structures facilitates strategic influencing of policy decisions, fosters ownership, avoids duplication of efforts, and ensures institutionalisation and sustainability of the MAC.

Each country has its unique multisectoral nutrition coordination structure and the NIPN MAC should be anchored in this existing structure. In countries where a national multisectoral nutrition coordination structure is not yet existent or functional, it is still important to establish a MAC, linking NIPN to the relevant line ministries which are responsible for nutrition-specific and

nutrition-sensitive interventions.

Taking into consideration the diversity of the national contexts, the following scenarios can be found:

- **Scenario 1:** Countries that have functioning national multisectoral coordination structures in place which meet the MAC's purposes and role.
- **Scenario 2:** Countries that have functioning national multisectoral coordination structures in place which do NOT meet the MAC's purposes and role.
- **Scenario 3:** Countries that do not yet have a national multisectoral coordination structure officially in place.

Each country set-up will be linked to a different scenario, influencing how the MAC can be established and how to best anchor it to multisectoral coordination structures.

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### 2.3 - MAC's role in the NIPN operational cycle

The National Information Platforms for Nutrition operate through a three-stage process of question formulation, data analysis, and communication of findings to influence policy decisions in nutrition. The Multisectoral Advisory Committee (MAC) has a critical role to play in ensuring that the focus of these processes is relevant, appropriate and timely for the different stakeholders.

With respect to the **formulation of policy questions**, the MAC:

- Contributes to capturing and orienting broad policy demand
- Contributes to the drafting of policy questions
- Validates the policy questions to be answered by NIPN
- Ensures the NIPN time frame to answer policy questions is aligned with the needs of the decision makers

To support **data analysis**, the MAC:

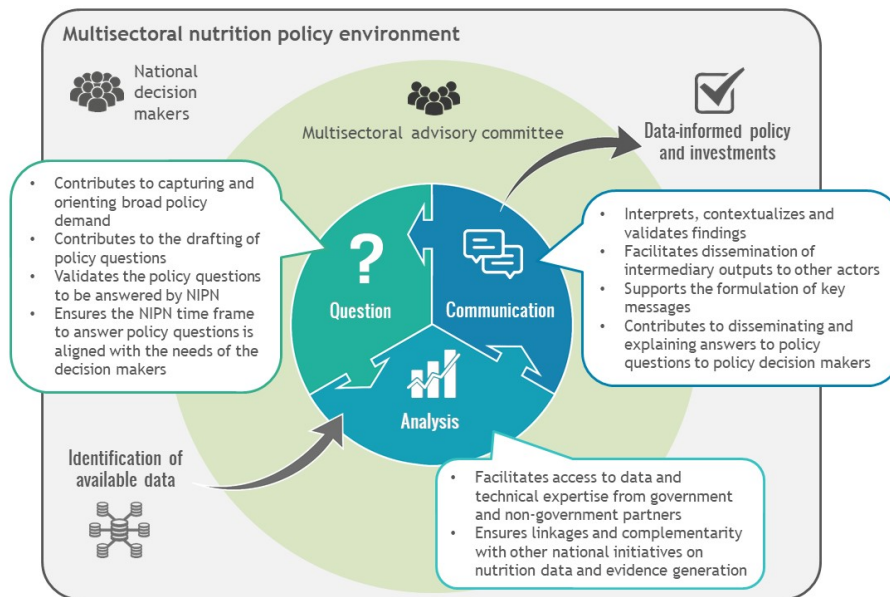
- Facilitates access to data and technical expertise from government and non-government partners
- Ensures linkages and complementarity with other national initiatives on nutrition data and evidence generation

Regarding **communication and dissemination of findings**, the MAC:

- Interprets, contextualises and validates findings
- Facilitates dissemination of intermediary outputs to other actors (e.g. results and recommendations of a data gap assessment) who are better placed to take relevant action
- Supports the formulation of key messages
- Contributes to disseminating and explaining answers to policy questions to policy decision makers

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The MAC plays a role in all steps of the NIPN operational cycle



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## 2.4 - MAC's core principles

A series of core principles guides the creation of a Multisectoral Advisory Committee (MAC) in country. The following principles will allow the MAC to be effective and efficient:

1. **Embedded** within existing multisectoral coordination structures and high-level representation of each key sector that contributes to the implementation of the Multisectoral Nutrition Policies and Plans of Action.
2. **Formalised:** Operating procedures and terms of reference should be formally endorsed by all stakeholders. Preferably, where possible, the mandate and functions of the MAC need formal government approval or a decree, or any other official description of the roles and composition, such as a terms of reference.
3. **Continuity of high-level participation:** MAC members, especially sectoral government representatives, are invited because of their strategic position and influence, and their convening power. They play a pivotal role and should not be represented by lower-level staff.
4. **Open to participation by external experts:** Non-government experts might be invited to join the MAC on an ad hoc basis to provide expertise and enhance complementarity with other initiatives. For example, representatives of the SUN networks (donors, UN, civil society, research and academia, private sector).

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## 2.5 - Establishing the MAC (1/4)

The positioning and composition of a Multisectoral Advisory Committee will depend on the structures already in place in country. The following steps help to establish a MAC which is appropriate to country context and needs:

1. Review coordination structures of multisectoral policies and plans for nutrition
2. Select the best option with all stakeholders
3. Prepare terms of reference and way of working
4. Appoint the Chair and other members

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### **1. Review coordination structures of multisectoral policies and plans of action for nutrition**

A review of existing national multisectoral coordination structures can be undertaken as a first step to help identify the different options for positioning the MAC. Such a review might have already taken place during the preparation phase of the NIPN project.

The review needs to be conducted at the administrative level at which the multisectoral nutrition coordination is taking place, which in most countries is at the national level and in some countries also at sub-national level. In case the NIPN platform may also be operationalised at sub-national level, the MAC may also need to be established at that very level, preceded by a review of the actors at sub-national level.

#### **Such a review assesses:**

- Organisation of national multisectoral nutrition coordination structures
- Existence of coordinating committees and where they sit within government structures
- Degree of multisectoral involvement
- Degree of functionality
- Mandate and theme of technical committees
- Influence of technical committees on decision-making in nutrition

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An existing committee may take on the MAC functions

In cases where a technical multisectoral committee exists with a specific mandate in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning of the Multisectoral Nutrition Policy and Plan of Action such a committee might be well placed to take up the MAC functions. This would allow complementarity and synergy between NIPN and other nutrition data initiatives ([see the Ethiopia case study in this section, page 9](#)).

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## 2.6 - Establishing the MAC (2/4)

### 2. Select the best option with all stakeholders

Based on the review, several options will become apparent.

It is important that all options are considered and discussed with the national government and non-government partners to reach agreement. The Multisectoral Advisory Committee will be most effective when there is full consensus among stakeholders on its positioning, composition and mandate.

Depending on country context, the review may identify the following scenarios:

- A multisectoral committee already exists and can efficiently take on the MAC role (**scenario 1**).
- A multisectoral committee already exists but does not have the capacities to efficiently take on the MAC role. In such cases, a new committee or sub-working group may be created that formally links to the existing structure. Linkages need to be spelt out (**scenario 2**).
- A multisectoral coordination structure does not yet exist in country, or is not fully functional. In such cases, a MAC will need to be formed with clear links to decision makers (**scenario 3**).

The core principles of the MAC and the following factors should be considered when choosing the best option for the MAC:

- **Functionality:** Is the proposed option currently functioning appropriately, with regular, well-attended meetings, visible outputs and noticeable linkages to high-level coordination structures which are being leveraged when needed?
- **Efficiency:** Does the proposed option operate in an efficient way? Does it have the ability to convene the right people and to produce high-quality outputs in a relatively short time frame?
- **Representativeness:** Does the proposed option allow for full representation of all sectors involved in the Multisectoral Nutrition Plan of Action, and is there active participation of all these representatives?
- **Authority:** Does the proposed option have the authority to convene and are the opinions and recommendations of the committee listened to and acted upon by high-level authorities?

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## 2.7 - Establishing the MAC (3/4)

### 3. Prepare Terms of Reference and way of working

The preparation of written and signed Terms of Reference could be part of formalising of a Multisectoral Advisory Committee.

### **These Terms of Reference should include:**

- The formal mandate of the MAC
- The objectives of the MAC in relation to the NIPN operational cycle
- The tasks of the MAC
- The roles and responsibilities of the MAC Chair, the MAC Secretary and the other members
- The mechanisms of accountability of individual members and of the MAC as a whole
- The agreed way of working
- The description of relationships with higher coordination structures

In practice, the way of working of the MAC must be adapted to its role in the operational cycle of NIPN as well as to the needs and timelines of the relevant policy processes. An annual work plan prepared in close collaboration with the NIPN team will help the MAC in the planning of its meetings and other activities.

Meeting frequency will depend on the NIPN operational cycle. Flexibility is required to be able to respond to unforeseen changes in policy and programmes direction due to external developments (e.g. publication of new data or new insights).

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## **2.8 - Establishing the MAC (4/4)**

### **4. Appoint the Chair and other members**

The Chair of the Multisectoral Advisory Committee and its members will need to have the technical and functional capacities to take on their roles. These roles are not minor and sufficient time should therefore be allocated to the MAC meetings and follow-up work. High-level Chairs may not have sufficient time to prepare an agenda or follow-up actions of a meeting and therefore require a good Secretary who has the time to do this work. The Secretary could be a member of the NIPN core team.

Experience suggests that the Chair and the members need to be officially nominated by their respective government institutions, and mandated to participate, speak and act on behalf of their institution. Practically, this could be done by an official memo from the Human Resources department to ensure dedicated participation. Appointing alternates may reduce the risk of gaps due to high turnover in government bodies.

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### **Skills and competencies**

In addition to the overall principles and criteria to establish a MAC, it is helpful to identify a Chair and MAC members with the following skills and competencies:

- Deep understanding of the relevant sectoral policy, planning and budgeting processes, timelines and actors which are relevant to nutrition
- Understanding of and experience in multisectoral nutrition strategy development and/or coordination
- Collaborative and inclusive attitude towards other sectors
- Capacity to influence strategy
- Convening power and leverage
- Influential and large network

In addition to the above, it is useful to select a Chair who has ‘soft’ skills in building trust, creating consensus and managing conflicts. She or he should have the convening power and ability to mobilise engagement and action across sectors.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Capacity building**

Nominated MAC members and alternates from government institutions could benefit from the capacity building efforts of NIPN, such as participation in workshops and webinars related to the NIPN operational cycle of ‘questions-analysis-findings’.

Examples illustrating MAC participation in countries

Ethiopia involved all the members of the National Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee in the inception workshop of the NIPN Capacity Strategy development while Guatemala embarked the core MAC group composed of four key ministries on the workshop initiating the NIPN question formulation process ([see the case studies on Ethiopia and Guatemala in this section, page 9](#)).

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## **2.9 - Country case studies**

### **Guatemala**

#### **Key messages:**

- The NIPN in Guatemala has been fully integrated into the national coordination structures for food security and nutrition.
- A working committee of the existing Intersectoral Technical Committee (CTI), which was created by law, will perform the function of Multisectoral Advisory Committee.
- This set-up not only ensures institutionalisation of the MAC, but also the legitimacy and authority to create a data-driven policy dialogue and influence policy decisions.

More information [below](#).

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## **Ethiopia**

### **Key messages**

- Ethiopia has taken a dual approach to ensuring high-level multisectoral advice: it makes use of an existing committee and in addition will establish a dedicated NIPN Advisory Committee
- Integrating the functions of a MAC into an existing coordination structure ensures its authority, strategic influence and sustainability.
- At the same time, it allows the awareness and capacity building across all sectors with regard to the NIPN operational cycle

More information [below](#).

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Detailed country case studies

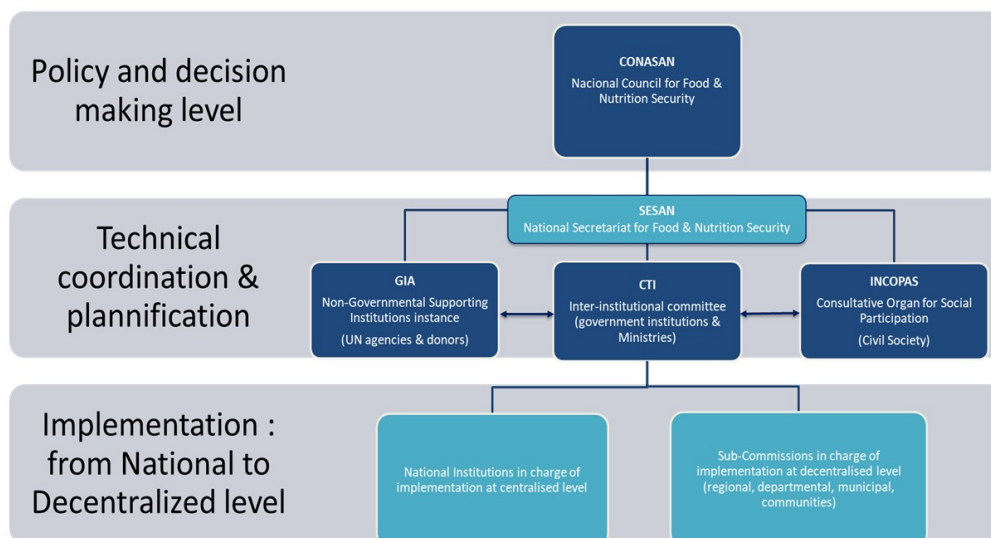
### **Setting up a Multisectoral Advisory Committee: a Guatemala case study**

#### **Context**

Guatemala has strengthened and institutionalised its approach to food and nutrition security through a series of legal and policy frameworks for food security and nutrition. This process began in 2005 when a law was enacted that saw the establishment of the multisectoral coordination system, the National System for Food and Nutrition Security (SINASAN).

SESAN (Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security) is the core structure of the multisectoral nutrition coordination system in the country, operating under the Guatemala Presidency, which also hosts a committee of all ministers as its decision-making body. SESAN is also in charge of overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2016-2020.

#### **Organisational structure of the Guatemala National System for Food and Nutrition Security (SINASAN)**



When NIPN was set up in 2017 it was positioned as a key vehicle to support SESAN in tracking and generating evidence on the implementation of Guatemala’s National Strategy to Prevent Chronic Malnutrition 2016-2020. The Strategy is aligned with the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy but it offers a more in-depth focus on stunting reduction. As such, NIPN strengthens the existing centralised information system, managed by SESAN, which relies on data from the information systems of different key ministries.

## **Creation and institutionalisation of the Multisectoral Advisory Committee**

As the NIPN positioning was clarified, different options for the creation of the Multisectoral Advisory Committee (MAC) were considered during the six-month design phase of NIPN in 2017. The options were based on a thorough review of the national multisectoral coordination structures led by CATIE (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza), the implementing partner of the NIPN, which included a review of legal documents and interviews with key government and non-government counterparts. Considering the Guatemala specificities, stakeholders agreed that the MAC should support the existing system and thus be part of the existing food and nutrition security coordination structures.

The final decision was to link the MAC to the existing Inter-sectoral Technical Committee (or CTI). The CTI is a technical committee in which all ministries playing a role in food and nutrition security are represented. Though only formed by government representatives, its regulation allows calling upon ad hoc participation of development partners and civil society.

The choice for this option aligns with the core principles of the MAC: it is embedded into multisectoral coordination structures, the structure is formalised to ensure members’ continued participation, and it has the flexibility to invite ad hoc participation of experts outside the government.

In the legal statutes of the existing committee, CTI is allowed to “create any permanent and temporary committees that it deems necessary to fulfil its functions”. When committees are permanent or integrated “their nature, purpose and organisation must be specified, and the financial resources necessary for its operation shall be indicated”. The MAC is registered as a “Working Committee” under the CTI by law, thus ensuring its

institutionalisation and sustainability.

## **Role of the MAC**

The Multisectoral Advisory Committee's main role is to *“support, orient and provide technical inputs to any of the NIPN work streams aiming at strengthening the Centralised Information System for Food and Nutrition Security to fulfil its mandate of tracking progresses of implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent Chronic Malnutrition and understanding the evolution of chronic malnutrition in a coordinated and comprehension approach.”*

### **Specific roles of the committee include:**

- Identifying and formulating policy needs and questions in relation to the progress made in the implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent Chronic Malnutrition;
- Identifying information and data gaps and overcoming bottlenecks in relation to the above, and in particular to problems related to data quality and consistency;
- Supporting the analysis and generation of information to answer the above-mentioned policy needs and questions;
- Mobilising expertise and technical support as required for the implementation of the NIPN operational cycle;
- Supporting the interpretation of existing data and information on nutrition to improve understanding of the determinants of the nutrition situation, both nationally and at sub-national level, with a particular focus on supporting the pilot department and municipalities;
- Formulating key messages and recommendations in order to communicate the findings of the analyses to policy makers;
- Contributing to tracking the progress of stunting prevention at the national, departmental and municipal levels;
- Contributing to the strengthening of national capacity and enhancing the accountability of government and donors to the CTI.

### **Composition and working modalities at national level**

The Committee is multisectoral and multi-stakeholder by nature: it is composed of representatives from the governmental institutions and all ministries who are part of the Food and Nutrition Security System, typically programme officers in charge of planning, monitoring and evaluation. The full Committee is chaired by the Head of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division of SESAN.

To operate with maximum efficiency, a core group has been constituted from representatives of the four key ministries and institutions responsible for the implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent Chronic Malnutrition: the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance; the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food; the Ministry of Social Development; and the agency in charge of supplying potable water.

The Committee will seek the active contribution and participation of representatives from civil society, the private sector and international development partners, since the law permits civil society and partners'

representation in and contribution to CTI committees.

The CTI not only provides oversight to the MAC but will also present its findings and recommendations to the decision-making committees of all ministers involved in food and nutrition security. Intermediary outputs and findings of the MAC will be shared with other technical coordination fora, such as the SUN platform, and civil society and donors coordination fora.

## **Strengths and challenges**

As all stakeholders in Guatemala felt it was crucial to formally embed the MAC in the existing food and nutrition security coordination structures, the first six months of the NIPN implementation phase focused on the institutionalisation process (October 2017 to March 2018). This elaborate process offered the MAC the legitimacy and authority to function effectively. The MAC will use the existing formal communication mechanisms between the technical and decision-making levels to create a data-driven policy dialogue. Though it is too early to have evidence, this set-up maximises the probability of influencing policy decisions and sustaining the policy dialogue beyond the duration of the project.

The current set-up does not come without challenges. The CTI structure is required to comply with government procedures to call upon meetings and thus may lack the flexibility and reactivity to respond in a timely manner to the NIPN's needs. Mobilising the full committee, with its large number of government representatives, has proven to be challenging up to now. However, the constitution of the core group - with officially appointed representatives from the four key ministries - offers the flexibility to function in an agile and efficient manner. Since December 2018 the core group has met in specific instances including a first workshop to initiate the process of formulating policy questions.

## **The way forward for strengthening the sub-national level**

The NIPN platform in Guatemala aims for replication at the sub-national level. SESAN has selected one department to study the cost-efficiency of setting up an NIPN platform at the decentralised level, including a departmental MAC.

## **Setting up a Multisectoral Advisory Committee: an Ethiopia case study**

### **Context**

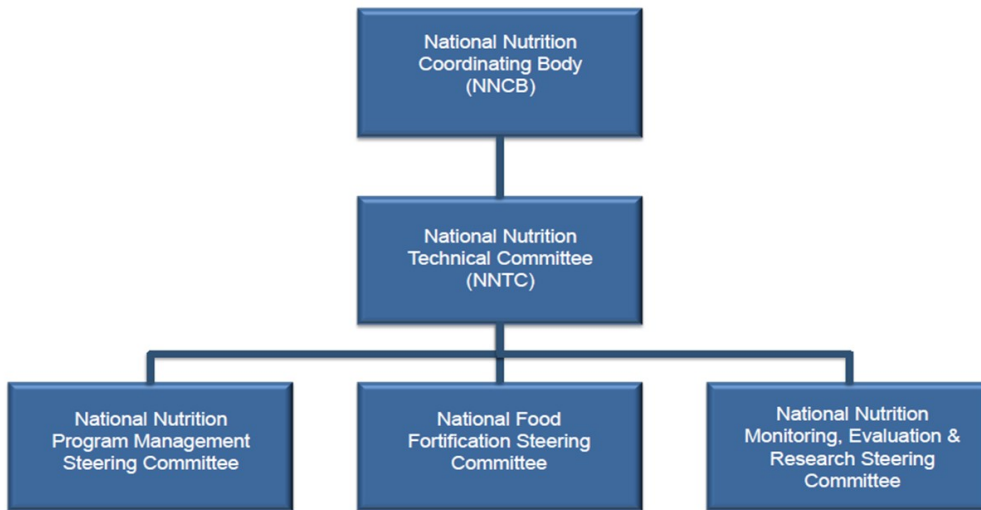
Ethiopia is implementing the second phase of its National Nutrition Programme Phase II (NNP-II) 2016-2020. NNP-II is co-signed by 13 Ministries. It is governed by a multisectoral national coordination structure, consisting of the National Coordination Body at high political and decision-making level, and of the National Nutrition Technical Committee at technical and planning level.

NIPN in Ethiopia is established under the umbrella of the national

multisectoral nutrition program and its governance system. It aims to generate knowledge and lessons learned to guide the implementation of NNP-II and support its contributing sectors.

NIPN is hosted by the Ethiopia Public Health Institute (EPHI) who is also the chair of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (M&E&R SC), one of the three high level thematic committees of the national multisectoral coordination structure. In addition, due to its multiple responsibilities, EPHI is closely linked to the National Nutrition Technical Committee and the National Nutrition Coordination Body.

### **Multisectoral coordination structure of the National Nutrition Programme (NNP) Phase II (2016-2020)**



### **Creation of the Multisectoral Advisory Committee**

During the NIPN design phase, the M&E&R SC was identified as the best placed committee to take up the role of the Multisectoral Advisory Committee to NIPN, because its objectives are so closely aligned with the NIPN objectives. The committee aims to provide technical support and direction, to generate evidence and monitor progress, and to timely inform decision-making for successful implementation of the NNP-II. The members of the M&E&R SC represent all NNP-II signatory government ministries, as well as donors, civil society and research organisations. The SC has most of the MAC attributes: it has included many of the functions for NIPN into its TOR and will play the validation and the communication and dissemination functions; it is ideally placed to be the official relay between the NIPN and the national decision making level. It also presents the advantage of meeting most of the MAC core principles: being part of the existing multisectoral coordination structure overseeing the NNP-II implementation progress; ensuring regular participation of the government representatives of the NNP-II and having the ability to mobilise additional expertise through donors, civil society and research organisations' participation.

Despite all these advantage, the steering committee has many members. While this steering committee has integrated NIPN advisory roles in its terms of reference, the NIPN also anticipates to create a dedicated NIPN MAC, which will be composed of a small group of selected advisors with high level

decision making leverage and with close linkages with ministers. This dedicated MAC will be created in 2019 and it is expected to take up a selected set of NIPN specific activities.

## **Composition and working modalities at national level**

Thus, the MAC follows a dual approach in Ethiopia as it relies on an existing committee, the M&E&R SC and a dedicated NIPN Advisory Committee.

Existing Terms of Reference defined the M&E&R SC membership and operational modalities prior to the NIPN. In addition to those, the M&E&R SC will take up the following MAC tasks:

- Support, advise and coordinate efforts on the development and utilization of a nutrition database under NIPN
- Support the identification of key priority areas for nutrition policy research to better understand the evolution of the national nutrition program and the need for re-direction
- Help to identify key policy questions in line with high level decision makers demand
- Relay and support findings dissemination to high level decision makers, through the national multisectoral coordination (NNCB and NNCT)
- When applicable, actively contribute to the NIPN Capacity Needs Assessment process and be involved in the capacity strengthening efforts launched by NIPN

In the NIPN inception period, the M&E&R Steering Committee has requested the NIPN team to explore further which activities should be carried out to further enhance stunting reduction. As a result, the team has started working on a NIPN demonstration project on WASH and nutrition.

EPHI is the chair of the M&E&R SC, with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) as co-chair.

## **Strengths and challenges**

The main advantage of embedding some of the functions of the MAC within this existing M&E&R SC lies in the fact that it is already a functioning and credible structure. The Committee's Terms of Reference are formalized and all committee members have been officially assigned by their respective ministries and are well sensitized with respect to the current nutrition issues in the country and within their respective institutions. The SC is meeting on a regular basis, and many members have direct links to high-level decision makers. It is expected that the multisectoral character of the committee will facilitate data access across sectors, as members have a vested interest in responding to the policy questions taken up by NIPN.

Through its role as chair of the M&E&R SC and its role in the NNCT and the NNCB, EPHI is engaging on a continuous basis with a wide set of multisectoral nutrition stakeholders. It reports on NIPN to the highest nutrition governance structures, allowing for high-level political and decision-making leverage.

Finally, this set-up further promotes the multisectoral implementation of the

NNP and facilitates the capacity building approach of NIPN, with motivated members of the M&E&R SC both contributing to the capacity need assessment process, as well as benefiting from the capacity building investments.

However, as the NIPN MAC will be functional only in 2019, it remains to be seen whether it will have the ability to create efficient working relationships with the M&E&R SC to work in complementarity and whether it will acquire the respectability to influence the higher decision making level.

## 3 - NIPN capacity development plan

### 3.1 - Capacity development is at the core of NIPN

This guidance note focuses specifically on capacity development for individuals and organisations involved in the National Information Platforms for Nutrition. It takes the range of capacities into account that are required for the three steps in the **NIPN operational cycle**: Question formulation, Analysis of data, Communication of findings. It emphasises that functional skills are as important as technical knowledge, and suggests a range of mechanisms through which capacity can be developed beyond technical training courses. Each NIPN team will tailor its capacity development efforts to its unique national context.

Typically NIPN teams will address the following questions:

- **What are the capacities required for NIPN to function well in a country? (Step 1)**
- **How is existing capacity to implement NIPN assessed and gaps identified? (Step 2)**
- **What is included a NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action? (Step 3)**

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What is capacity development?

Capacity development refers to *“the process through which individuals, organisations and societies increase their ability to perform, solve problems, define objectives, understand and deal with development needs to achieve objectives in a sustainable manner.”*

Source: LaFond AK, Brown L & Macintyre K (2002) Mapping capacity in the health sector: a conceptual framework. International Journal of Health Planning and Management 17, 3-22.

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Capacity development also known as capacity building or capacity strengthening, is an integral part of the NIPN approach. When capacity is weak or absent, a NIPN cannot function, deliver or be sustained. As the NIPN approach, and especially the step of ‘Formulating policy-relevant questions’, is new and requires a different way of working for policy decision makers and

data analysts, capacity development is essential to implement the NIPN operational cycle.

There is no one established way of building capacity. Rather, it is a continuous learning and change process which requires a variety of tools and methods, a flexible approach, and long-term investment. Frequently, capacity development efforts translate into one-off technical trainings but these will not lead to sustained improvements unless they are part of a broader long-term approach.

A first step for a NIPN country team is to identify the capacities that are required for effective implementation of NIPN at each of the three levels (individual, organisational and systemic), and for each element of the NIPN operational cycle (question formulation, analysis of data and communication of findings). This is largely a theoretical exercise which can be carried out during the inception phase of a NIPN in country.

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## 3.2 - The NIPN Capacity Framework

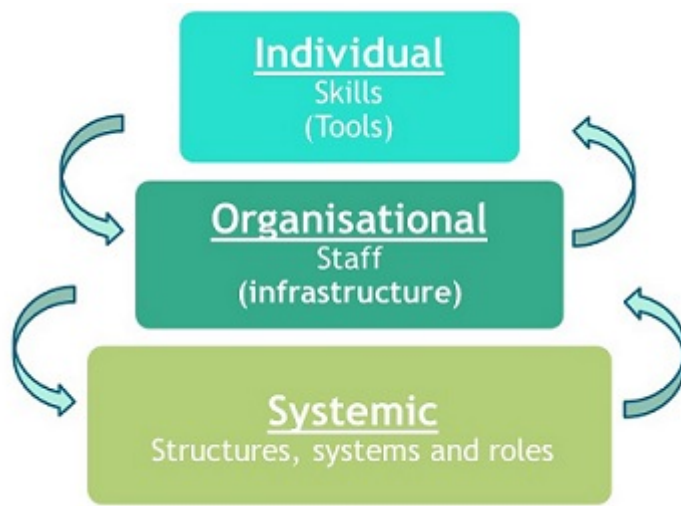
### **What are the capacities required for NIPN to function well in a country?**

The NIPN Capacity Framework helps to understand the breadth of capacities required for the optimal implementation of a NIPN. These go beyond an individual's capacity in terms of knowledge, skills and experience, and encompass organisational and systemic capacities. The three levels of capacities are inter-dependent. The physical capacities, tools (individual level) and infrastructure (organisational level), mentioned in the model below (Potter, 2004) encompass equipment such as computers or infrastructure such as training centers. These capacities have been included in the project formulation phase and will not be discussed in this guidance note that focuses on the development of human resource capacity.

A NIPN will focus most strongly on strengthening the internal capacities directly relevant to implementing NIPN (at individual and organisational levels). It is also important, however, to consider the external system, as weaknesses in the multisectoral nutrition system may become obstacles to the implementation of the NIPN operational cycle.

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NIPN capacity framework

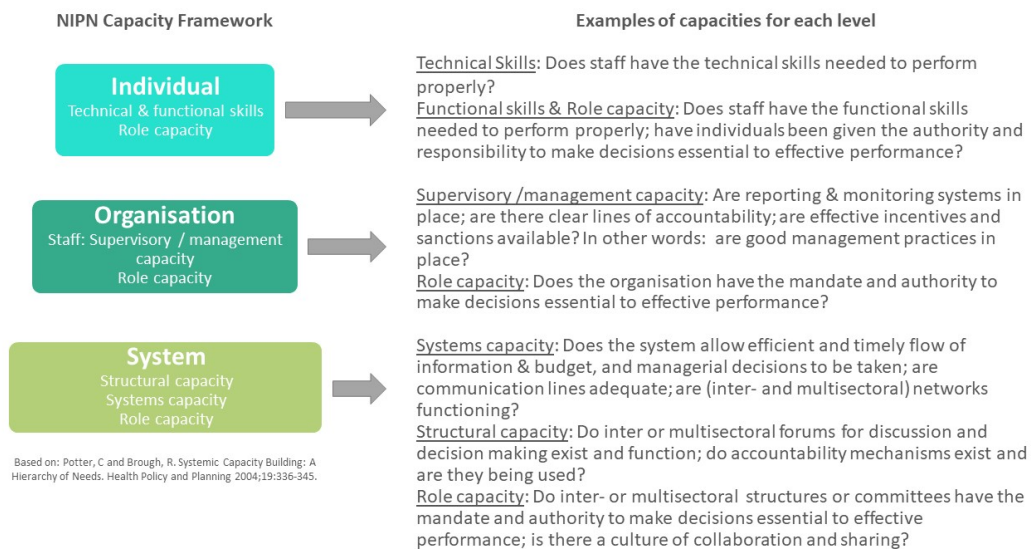


Based on: Potter, C and Brough, R. Systemic Capacity Building: A Hierarchy of Needs. Health Policy and Planning 2004;19:336-345.

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### 3.3 - Step 1: Identify the capacity requirements for NIPN (1/5)

#### Examples of capacities for each level



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

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### 3.4 - Step 1: Identify the capacity requirements for NIPN (2/5)

## The NIPN capacity matrix

A NIPN capacity matrix, which is derived from the NIPN Capacity Framework, is used to organise the capacities required in a logical way. It represents the ideal and a basis for identifying the capacity gaps. The aim is to generate a list of required capacities for each empty box.

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### The NIPN capacity matrix

Level	Capacities	1) Policy-relevant Question formulation	2) Analysis of data	3) Communication of findings
Individual	Technical skills			
	Functional skills & Role			
Organizational	Supervisory/ management			
	Role			
Systemic	Systems & Structures			
	Role			

When the process of filling out the tables for each of the levels of the Nutrition Capacity Matrix is complete, a comprehensive list of all capacity requirements for the smooth functioning of a NIPN has been compiled.

Functional or 'soft' skills are as important as technical skills and knowledge, so should be listed separately ([see the text box below](#)).

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### Definition of technical and functional skills

	Categories of functional skills	Examples
<p>Technical skills refer to the knowledge and capabilities needed to perform specialized tasks. For NIPN, this means skills such as data analysis, knowledge of the multisectoral nutrition system or ability to write a policy brief.</p> <p>Functional or 'soft' skills refer to the management, human and social skills that facilitate people, organisations and systems to work effectively. For NIPN, these encompass abilities to communicate, to influence, to convene and work across sectors.</p> <p>A number of functional skills or competencies are crucial for everyone working in a multisectoral team and complex approach. It is recommended that these capacities are being kept in mind when recruiting and developing staff: the ability to work constructively within a team, the ability to identify solutions to overcome challenges, the ability to network and work across sectors, the ability to build trust, etc.</p>	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbal communication</li> <li>Listening</li> <li>Public speaking</li> </ul>
	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic planning</li> <li>Decision-making</li> <li>Delegation</li> </ul>
	Influencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiation</li> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Collaboration</li> </ul>
	Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking</li> <li>Persuasiveness</li> <li>Interpersonal communication</li> </ul>
	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional intelligence</li> <li>Self-awareness</li> <li>Adaptability</li> </ul>
	Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem-solving</li> <li>Innovation</li> <li>Critical thinking</li> </ul>
	Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation</li> <li>Planning</li> <li>Knowledge management</li> </ul>

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### 3.5 - Step 1: Identify the capacity requirements for NIPN (3/5)

#### Completing the NIPN matrix: individual level

Starting at the individual level, take one box at a time and compile a list of capacities for each of the 3 steps of the NIPN operational framework by addressing the following questions:

- What specific technical skills do individuals require?
- What specific functional skills do individuals require?
- What level of decision-making authority and responsibility does an individual need to perform effectively?

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#### Examples of required skills at individual level

Level	Capacities	1) Policy-relevant Question formulation	2) Analysis of data	3) Communication of findings
Individual NIPN staff	Technical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and strategic analysis of national nutrition policy processes, coordination mechanisms, timelines and actors.</li> <li>• Understanding of and experience in development of multisectoral nutrition policies, plans and programmes.</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of multiple data sets, data cleaning and harmonization.</li> <li>• Knowledge of statistical software, and experience of advanced statistical analyses and survey methods.</li> <li>• Ability to identify the key strategic results of data analysis</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of audiences: the actors within the system.</li> <li>• Competency and experience of advocacy and communication strategy development and delivery.</li> <li>• Competency and experience of report writing and communication to high level actors.</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>
	Functional skills & Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic influencing of actors across sectors.</li> <li>• Ability to negotiate and build consensus</li> <li>• Ability to convene across sectors and groups.</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be flexible and service-oriented</li> <li>• Be transparent and systematic</li> <li>• Ability to present data clearly to non-statisticians</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate, influence and convince</li> <li>• ‘Broker’ knowledge and information</li> <li>• Inter-personal communication skills</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>

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### 3.6 - Step 1: Identify the capacity requirements for NIPN (4/5)

#### Completing the NIPN matrix: organisational level

Repeat the same process for the organizational level by addressing the following questions:

- What do NIPN host institutions require to function effectively?
- What organisational support do staff require to work effectively?

The organisational capacities are the same for all three elements of the NIPN operational cycle.

The below table provides examples of NIPN organisational capacity requirements but needs to be completed for each country context.

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## Examples of required skills at organisational level

Level	Capacities	1) Policy-relevant Question formulation	2) Analysis of data	3) Communication of findings
NIPN team within host organisations	Supervisory / Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient management &amp; coordination amongst policy and data components of NIPN</li> <li>• Project management system in place</li> <li>• Clear accountability lines with appropriate incentives and sanctions</li> <li>• Human Resource management: allocation of the right staff with sufficient time: workload management</li> <li>• Organisational mandate and position in relation to the multisectoral nutrition coordination system</li> <li>• Credibility and reputation of the host organisation</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		
	Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity on roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Team composition: balanced skills set and collaboration between staff from host organisation &amp; project-based staff</li> <li>• Authority / culture to act and make decisions at corresponding level</li> <li>• Access to and open communication lines with management level</li> <li>• Place of NIPN team and Influence within the host organisation</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		

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## 3.7 - Step 1: Identify the capacity requirements for NIPN (5/5)

### Completing the NIPN matrix: systemic level

The systemic level refers to the national system or 'enabling environment' for nutrition. The systemic capacities are the same for all three elements of the NIPN operational cycle.

In most NIPN countries, a landscape analysis has already been completed to assess the national nutrition structures and system. This has either been done by the NIPN country team or entities such as the SUN Movement Networks. This landscape analysis can be used to identify where the system is functioning sub-optimally and requires to be strengthened. Though the main purpose of NIPN is not to strengthen the systemic nutrition capacity in a country, a NIPN may support other agencies that are doing so.

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### Examples of required skills at systemic level

Level	Capacities	1) Policy-relevant Question formulation	2) Analysis of data	3) Communication of findings
Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination System, in which NIPN is embedded	Systems and Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective understanding and ability within all sectors to support and implement multisectoral nutrition policies and plans</li> <li>• Functional national multisectoral nutrition coordination system in place, which embraces NIPN, e.g. a functional Multisectoral Advisory Committee.</li> <li>• Functioning national information systems to collect nutrition-related data</li> <li>• Nutrition-related data sets available and accessible / shared</li> <li>• Legislative framework enabling multisectoral collaboration, data sharing, etc.</li> <li>• Media channels available and accessible</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		
	Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture of sharing data and transparency in communicating analysis and evidence</li> <li>• Transparent budget allocation and budget flows</li> <li>• Culture and mechanisms to hold each other to account</li> <li>• Structural inter- and multisectoral knowledge sharing and discussions</li> <li>• Efficient and timely decision making</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		

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### 3.8 - Step 2: Analyse the capacity gap for NIPN (1/3)

How is existing capacity to implement NIPN assessed and gaps identified?  
The objectives of a capacity gap analysis are to:

- **Assess** existing capacity, mainly focused on individual and organisational capacity as these are the levels at which NIPN largely operates
- **Identify** the critical gaps
- **Prioritise** the actions to be taken

There is no single 'right' way of conducting a NIPN capacity gap analysis. The exact format of a capacity gap analysis for the purpose of NIPN will depend on the country context, time and resources available. Typically, it involves gathering and analysing qualitative data.

Some general principles that can be followed include:

1. Follow a phased approach
2. Ask for support from an expert
3. Adopt a variety of methods
4. Use the NIPN Capacity Matrix to develop questions
5. Focus the analysis on identification of gaps
6. Prioritise areas for capacity development

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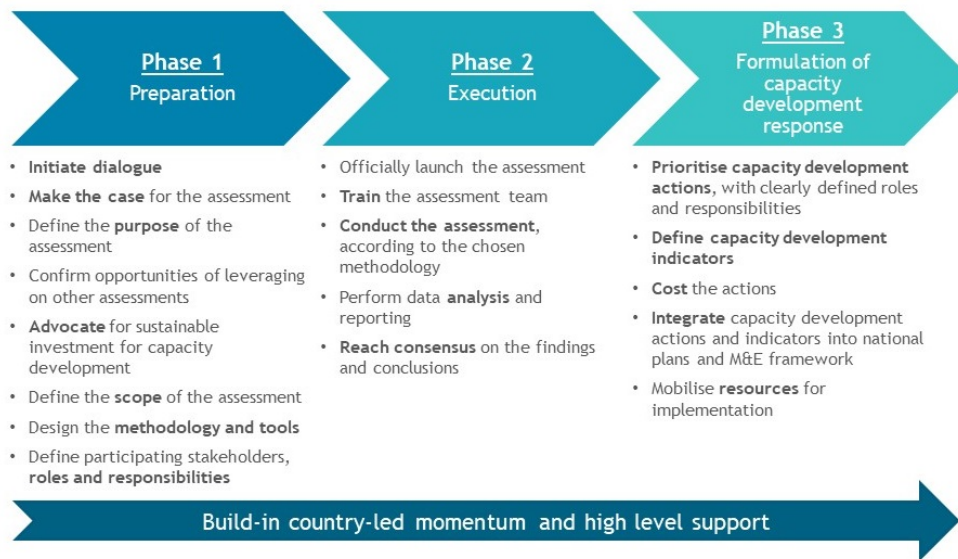
#### **1. Follow a phased approach**

The SUN Movement has provided detailed guidance on how to conduct a nutrition capacity assessment and suggests a phased approach (see text box). Make use of the Capacity Development Framework presented in this Guidance Tool.

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SUN Movement Nutrition Assessment Guidance 2016

Two SUN Movement guidance documents have been produced to support countries to conduct nutrition capacity assessments. These assessments are focused on the systemic level, and are comprehensive assessments of the capacity to plan, coordinate, finance, implement and monitor nutrition programmes. Whilst this remit is much broader than is required for the purposes of a NIPN, the guidance provides some useful tips and sets out the three phases for carrying out an assessment.



Source: SUN UN Network. September 2016. Nutrition capacity assessment package - [Part I - Guidance note](#) & [Part II - Tools and Resources](#).

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### 3.9 - Step 2: Analyse the capacity gap for NIPN (2/3)

#### 2. Ask for support from an expert

Capacity gap analysis requires a specific set of skills, expertise and time. It is advisable to seek external specialist technical assistance before embarking on the process.

In Ethiopia, for example, technical assistance was provided by IFPRI's Head of Capacity Strengthening to guide the process of NIPN capacity gap assessment and analysis ([see the case study on Ethiopia below](#)). The REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition) partnership has facilitators who focus on strengthening the capacity of national stakeholders and institutions and may provide a source of expertise in the countries in which they work. Other development partners may also be able to provide specialist technical assistance.

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#### 3. Adopt a variety of methods

It is good practice to adopt a number of different methods to gather and triangulate qualitative data and validate quantitative data e.g. questionnaires, workshops, on-line survey, and focus group discussions ([see the Chad example and Ethiopia case study below](#)).

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Taking the form of a qualitative study, and supported by REACH, information was gathered using three methods:

- a desk review,
- key informant interviews and
- focus groups with representatives from government and the respective SUN networks.

The study focused on the functional capacities of the Permanent Technical Food and Nutrition Committee and the newly established food and nutrition committees in five regions - Guéra; Logone Occidental; Ouaddaï; Tandjilé; and Wadi Fari - looking at their respective capacity to plan, manage and coordinate nutrition actions. The assessment identified a series of capacity development needs, and documented strengths and achievements.

Source: [SUN UN network](#)

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Country case study

### **Capacity development Ethiopia case study**

The Ethiopia NIPN country team is adopting a dual approach to building capacity by addressing immediate needs for NIPN specific capacity while developing a long term and systematic capacity strengthening strategy which supports the overall monitoring, evaluation and research agenda of the national nutrition program.

### **NIPN capacity needs assessment**

To develop Ethiopia's long-term capacity to manage and maintain a NIPN, it is important to identify existing capacities as well as any additional capacities needed to sustain the NIPN approach in the country. A Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) was launched in 2018 to explore capacity gaps related to evidence based policy making and the monitoring, evaluation and research agenda of the National Nutrition Program (NNP).

This process was initiated by a workshop, facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which brought together 36 nutrition monitoring and research experts from various sectors and institutions in October 2018. Most of the workshop participants play a role in the National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee, which also has an advisory role for NIPN. The aims of the workshop were:

- To define a framework for the capacity needs assessment and

subsequent strategy related to strengthening the national nutrition monitoring, evaluation, and research agenda, and within it specific needs related to NIPN

- To agree on the current architecture for nutrition related policy processes, monitoring and evaluation and research i.e. assess the capacity of this aspect of the nutrition system in Ethiopia and how NIPN could strengthen it.

Workshop participants developed a framework, which included the ‘demand capacity’ for evidence by the policy makers as well as the ‘supply capacity’ of existing evidence, across three related levels (individual, organizational and systemic). As a result of this workshop an approach paper was developed, which guides the subsequent steps of this multisectoral process.

The next step is the actual assessment of the existing capacities and capacity needs, which was launched in the first trimester of 2019 through an elaborate multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholders participatory process. It included questionnaires, interviews and follow-up consultations with key stakeholders from different ministries, national institutions and universities responsible for collecting and monitoring data for nutrition, and for nutrition-related evaluation and research. Information was sought from over 20 national institutions, in addition to key informant interviews with multisectoral users of these data, including programmatic and policy decision makers.

## **NIPN capacity development strategy**

The findings of the capacity need assessment will be used to develop a capacity strengthening strategy, which will be finalized in the second trimester of 2019. In the meantime, action is already underway to address immediate capacity needs within NIPN.

### **Short-term capacity development**

A number of activities were undertaken during the first year of NIPN implementation to address the immediate capacity needs at the individual, organizational and systemic level. These needs were identified through the experiences with the “Learning-by- Doing” demonstration project (see later), rapid capacity needs assessments by direct NIPN stakeholders and were initiated in advance of the NIPN capacity assessment workshop.

#### **Individual level**

Different approaches have been used, including short training courses, ‘learning by doing’ and peer learning. Details of individual capacity development activities undertaken by Ethiopia in 2018 and 2019 are summarized in the table below.

INDIVIDUAL	Topic	Participants	Provider
Short Training courses	• Light literature review	8 EPHI experts involved in WASH demonstration project (see "learning by doing")	EPHI & IFPRI
	• Analytical framework for understanding policy reform processes	34 participants from multiple sectors involved in the National Nutrition Program	EPHI & IFPRI
	• STATA training (learning how to manipulation STATA; exercises geared to analyzing health related data of Living Standard Measurement Surveys)	27 nutrition staff from EPHI, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Universities of Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Hawassa, Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Water	EPHI & IFPRI
	• Analyse household income, consumption and expenditure surveys (consumption pattern, consumer choice, the role of prices, accessibility, affordability and diet composition)	23 nutrition researchers from EPHI, EIAR, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as Addis Ababa University	EPHI & IFPRI
	• Share IFPRI's experiences on data sharing, the development of a repository and relevant guidelines, approaches to confidentiality and access to data	EPHI and EIAR staff	EPHI and IFPRI
"Learning by doing"	• 'Demonstration research project' in 4 phases to review the evidence for linkages between the WASH sector, and health and nutrition outcomes; allows to identifying capacity needs which require direct attention. Most phases of this project are being supported by IFPRI experts (mentoring or training approach)	EPHI NIPN staff	EPHI and IFPRI
	• Respond to one small research question while using data of the household income, expenditure and consumption data with support of an IFPRI technical advisor		IFPRI and EPHI
Peer learning; South-South exchange	• Participation in Conferences such as 8th African Nutrition Epidemiology Conference (ANECVIII) conference & FAO-IFPRI 'Accelerating the end of hunger and malnutrition' Conference; Global GSF workshops	EPHI staff and National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee members ; high level nutrition policy makers ; Minister advisors on nutrition	Peers of other countries
	• Learning from other project such as POSHAN in India		

## Organisational level

Within EPHI a small, dedicated, team has been assigned to NIPN which collaborates with additional nutrition researchers from EPHI's Food Science and Nutrition Directorate and other relevant directorates. Their capacity has been strengthened in project management, creating a common understanding of the NIPN approach, analytical and communication capacities and finally creating a better understanding of the different elements of a data repository.

## Systemic level

- **Research-Policy seminars**

EPHI has started organizing regular NIPN Nutrition Research and Policy Seminars. These seminars bring together researchers, program implementers and policy decision makers to discuss and disseminate existing policy-relevant research findings. Participants come from research institutes, universities, non-government organisations and development partners.

- **Multi-sectoral involvement**

Selected staff of key ministries involved in the National Nutrition Program (NNP) and research institutions that are key for NIPN have been able to access the training opportunities provided under NIPN thus strengthening the long-term capacity of the broader Ethiopian nutrition system and forging partnerships. Members of the Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee as well as of the Food Based Dietary Guidelines Technical Committee and various universities participated actively in the analytical training.

## Long-term capacity development

In parallel to addressing short-term needs, the NIPN aims to address long term capacity requirements to manage and maintain a NIPN. Besides the research policy seminars and the multisectoral engagements, they also include:

### PhD training

Long term capacities are being strengthened by involving PhD students from local universities in the formal NIPN training courses. In addition, EPHI has a capacity building budget for staff linked to the NIPN analysis unit or the NIPN advisory committee to attend training (online or formal) in Ethiopia or

overseas, which will lead to a certificate, diploma or master's degree at an overseas university. EPHI can also hire local training institutes and subcontract local universities. There is also a small grant scheme to encourage and support the enrolment of about six staff involved in the NIPN to pursue a PhD programme to sustain capacities beyond the project timeframe. Two researchers have been identified and started their PhD programmes at Addis Ababa University in September 2018.

### **Mentoring**

The Senior Technical and Policy Advisor and the National Research Officer at IFPRI are assigned to support the NIPN full time and they provide continuous support and on the job training for staff and organisations involved in NIPN. In addition, IFPRI provides needs based technical support, which covers a wide set of NIPN skills, including writing, communication and analytical skills. In 2019, a report writing mentor was assigned to provide temporary support to the team. In 2019, IFPRI also assigned a researcher to guide a specific analytical process for further analysis of existing data.

### **Guidance notes**

A set of guidance notes on different aspects of the NIPN approach have been prepared by the NIPN GSF. This guidance aims to facilitate a coherent approach to implementing the NIPN operational cycle. NIPN team members from EPHI as well as from other key partner's institutions from the national nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee participated in webinars as well as in an on-site country workshop on the content of the guidance notes. The NIPN team in Ethiopia will adapt the guidelines to the local context. The NIPN Global Support Facility (GSF) based in Europe also provides direct technical support to NIPN country teams.

## **Challenges and opportunities**

While embarking into developing the capacity development strategy, the Ethiopia country case shows the importance of focusing on the bigger nutrition governance structure, national policies and programs in order to prevent overlap and ensure a sustainable system which supports the long-term objectives of NIPN:

1. Importance to set aside sufficient time which allows for a participatory process. The capacity needs assessment should involve all those who will ultimately be involved in NIPN
2. Assess earlier experiences and the existence of capacity needs assessment potentially conducted by partners' institutions or sectors. Often, sectors or partners have conducted their own assessment already. Thus, it is useful to avoid duplication and focus on the yet 'uncovered' or 'un-addressed' elements of capacity need assessment.
3. In developing the evaluation tools for the actual capacity needs assessment, be mindful about what the objective is and how to formulate the demand on capacity needs. The questionnaire design is an important element of the capacity need assessment as it influences the final output and its scope. Thus, the questionnaire and evaluation tools have to be designed to explore and capture the capacities to be developed as a

matter of priority and that will help to unlock potential bottlenecks and bring solutions to the key sectors and partners involved in the national monitoring, evaluation and research agenda in nutrition.

4. Be mindful of the selection of the respondents for the capacity need assessment and make sure to involve those linked to the national nutrition program. Where NIPN is supporting a national policy or program, it is important to link this capacity assessment and strategy on the actors involved in monitoring, evaluation, research or policy relevant of this national program.

### 3.10 - Step 2: Analyse the capacity gap for NIPN (3/3)

#### 4. Use the NIPN Capacity Matrix to assess the gaps

The completed NIPN Capacity Matrix contains a checklist of capacities that can be transformed into questions to ask during a gap analysis. The table below includes examples of questions relevant to the first step of the NIPN operational cycle: Policy-relevant question formulation. Similar and additional questions need to be formulated for the other steps as well.

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#### Gap assessment using the capacity matrix

Level	Capacities	1) Policy-relevant Question formulation
Individual	Technical	1. Do the key individuals have the appropriate technical skills to implement NIPN? (Understanding of national nutrition public policy processes, etc). ...
	Functional	2. Do the key individuals have the effective functional skills to implement NIPN? (ability to negotiate or manage conflict, inter-personal communication skills, work within a team, ability to identify solutions to overcome challenges) ...
Organizational	Role	3. Does the organisation enable individuals to perform in their respective roles in NIPN ? (are roles & responsibilities clear, is team composition adequate, is communication with management encouraged, ..?) ...
	Management & supervisory	4. Are appropriate management, monitoring and information systems in place to deliver on NIPN commitments? 5. Is the organisations mandate, its reputation and credibility conducive to deliver on NIPN commitments ? ...
Systemic	Systems & structures	6. Is the national multisectoral nutrition coordination system in place, functional and effective ? 7. Is a legislative framework to allow data sharing across institutions and sector in place, functional and effective ? ...
	Role	8. Is budget allocation transparent and effective ? 9. Is nutrition knowledge / evidence being shared effectively amongst all actors in the multisectoral nutrition coordination system? ...

\*\*\*\*\*

#### 5. Focus the analysis on identification of gaps

Large amounts of qualitative data can be difficult to analyse systematically. It is important to adopt some kind of system so that gaps can be identified. Examples of techniques that have been used are:

- **Grading** the level of capacity in a particular area from 0 = no capacity to 5 = complete capacity. This can be done either by participants in a workshop, respondents to a questionnaire or by the NIPN country team based on the information collected. Although this form of grading is

based on subjective judgements, it can help to identify where capacity is strong and where it is weak.

- **Thematic analysis** where emerging 'themes' are identified and the number of times that a 'theme' is mentioned is counted. NIPN Guatemala used this technique to analyse the responses to their questionnaire on capacity gaps and assess where there was greatest demand for capacity strengthening.

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## **6. Prioritise areas for capacity development**

The final step of the capacity gap analysis is to prioritise areas for NIPN capacity development. It is essential to involve national stakeholders to ensure that they are fully on board with the final list of priority areas and types of actions being considered. This is best done through a series of consultations or a consultative workshop.

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### **3.11 - Step 3: NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action (1/4)**

What is included in a country NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action?

Again, there is no one 'right' way of setting out a NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action. It will depend upon the findings of the nutrition capacity analysis and the particular country context.

Some general principles can be followed:

1. Decide on priorities for implementing the NIPN operational cycle
2. Make a planning with short- and long-term objectives and corresponding activities
3. Include technical and functional skills
4. Consider a mix of capacity development tools / activities
5. Capitalise on existing opportunities
6. Define an M&E framework
7. Cost capacity development actions

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#### **1. Decide on priorities for implementing the NIPN operational cycle**

It is important to focus on the priorities identified by stakeholders rather than produce a long 'wish list' that will be difficult to achieve. Furthermore, the focus should be on the organisations and individuals that are most critical for implementing a NIPN. Though a poorly functioning national nutrition system can present considerable challenges for the implementation of NIPN, others (government and development partners) working through initiatives such as

the SUN Movement can take the lead on systemic capacity development, with support from the NIPN country team.

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## **2. Make a planning with short-term and long-term objectives and corresponding activities**

Experience in NIPN countries has shown that there may be short-term capacity strengthening needs which can be addressed immediately. In Ethiopia, for example, the NIPN country team responded to immediate needs by organising three short training courses to develop skills in the statistical software STATA, in analysis of household survey data and in doing a literature review ([see the Ethiopia case study on page 9](#)).

It is vital that short-term capacity actions are linked to a longer-term strategy for a number of reasons. High staff turnover means that staff with skills and experience are continuously being replaced by staff who may not have the same skills and experience. Without on-going support and mentoring, the benefits of short-term efforts such as a one-off training can be lost. Longer-term strategies may include building NIPN related technical and functional skills into pre-service and in-service training of nutritionists and cadres working in nutrition-related sectors, such as food security, WASH, health, social security.

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### **3.12 - Step 3: NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action (2/4)**

## **3. Include technical and functional skills**

Individuals involved in the implementation of NIPN require both technical knowledge and functional skills. The latter are often neglected in favour of the former but are just as important. In recent years, more attention is being paid to the development of functional skills and there are courses to help enhance these skills. One example of this are the European and African Nutrition Leadership Programs ([see the text box below](#)). Follow up after the course will ensure that the benefits are sustained. Technical assistants providing in-country support to the NIPN team can play an important mentoring role and help to develop skills such as leadership, negotiation, conflict management, team-building across sectors and groups, communication, advocacy, and problem-solving.

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Example: the African Nutrition Leadership Programme

Its aim is to create purpose-driven teams and organisations that

effectively lead result-oriented nutrition change interventions. Developing and integrating managerial – leadership skills with existing technical skills is a critical success factor in effectively implementing nutrition interventions, The idea is not new, but its application in multisectoral teams working in nutrition, is.

The programme creates awareness of leadership orientation, strengths and gaps, personal values and purpose and helps to develop amongst others communication, conflict management, decision making, and problem solving skills.

Source: <https://www.africanutritionleadership.org/>

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#### 4. Consider a mix of capacity development approaches

The choice for one or another capacity development approach will depend on the objective, the target audience and its size, and the budget available. A range of different approaches to develop capacity exist and are listed in the table below. It is recommended that countries identify a balanced mix of different approaches based on their relative cost-effectiveness.

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Range of NIPN capacity development approaches

Individual	Organisational	Systemic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training (short-term, long-term)</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Peer learning events (regional, international)</li> <li>• Tool kits, guidance notes, handbooks</li> <li>• Twinning approach or exchange programmes</li> <li>• ICT (e-learning, portals, open education)</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance</li> <li>• Training on organizational management</li> <li>• Documentation and sharing of good practices</li> <li>• Inter-departmental exchanges</li> <li>• Study tours (within a NIPN country or external)</li> <li>• South-South learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public awareness campaign</li> <li>• Media training</li> <li>• Learning events or workshops for policy-makers and decision-makers</li> <li>• National or international days / events</li> <li>• Support membership of international, regional bodies (SUN Movement)</li> </ul>

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### 3.13 - Step 3: NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action (3/4)

#### 5. Capitalise on existing opportunities: be aware of other capacity-building initiatives in the country and aim to collaborate

Examples of capacity development opportunities for NIPN which are already in place include:

- Peer to peer learning through regional and international NIPN workshops and webinars organised by the Global Support Facility.
- This set of Guidance notes on a range of aspects of the NIPN process

- Mentoring and hands-on support in NIPN countries by NIPN technical assistants.
- Knowledge brokering ([see text box below](#)) which refers to the role of ‘middle men’ or brokers who make research and practice more accessible to others.

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### System’s capacity building through knowledge brokering

**Knowledge ‘brokering’** ensures that knowledge commonly available to researchers or global experts is being shared with policy makers, planners and implementers across different types of local organisations. It is important in the context of NIPN because academics have access to global resources and skills (such as the ability to analyse complex data or policy questions, conduct literature reviews, link to global databases and knowledge) which can support and strengthen processes and decisions in the national multisectoral nutrition coordination system.

Examples of knowledge ‘brokering’ include:

#### **Seminars**

In Ethiopia IFPRI / NIPN are organising monthly nutrition policy and research seminars which support informal capacity strengthening by bringing together researchers and policy-makers to:

- Disseminate existing research findings with the objective of promoting nutrition knowledge among decision makers.
- Promote interactions between decision makers and researchers. These seminars have focused on themes such as Food Systems and Diets in Ethiopia and Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture.

#### **Newsletters and websites**

Circulating nutrition-related research findings to a broader audience can be done through newsletters, E mail updates and websites.

The European Union Delegation in Ethiopia circulates a weekly e-newsletter containing relevant nutrition-related articles. The newsletter is circulated to over 100 nutrition partners in Ethiopia as a means of broadening the nutrition knowledge base.

A similar approach has been taken by POSHAN (Partnerships and Opportunities to Strengthen and Harmonise Actions for Nutrition in India) led by IFPRI. [Research Notes](#), which present a concise summary of research studies conducted by POSHAN and its partners, are available on the POSHAN website and help to extend access to the evidence base to a wider audience.

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## **3.14 - Step 3: NIPN capacity development strategy and plan of action (4/4)**

## 6. Define an M&E framework

It is important to establish and M&E framework in the capacity development strategy so that progress can be fully monitored. An example based on the [SUN Movement Nutrition Assessment Guidance 2016](#) is presented below.

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### Proposed M&E logframe for capacity development

The long-term goal of capacity development should be formulated as a learning or transformation process and should combine both technical and functional capacities.

The **specific objectives** are the changes to be achieved through a capacity development programme in the medium term. These are the changes at the outcome level.

**Outcomes** describe a specific change for individuals and organisations and are linked to outputs. Outcomes can be thought of not only in terms of new products and services but also in terms of facilitated processes (e.g. participatory process initiated/activated/expanded, collaboration increased among different organisations).

**Focusing outputs on capacity development** creates the foundation for sustainability of the intended results. To formulate outputs, the following questions can provide guidance: Whose capacity is developed? What capacity is developed? How do activities ensure that capacities are developed?

**Activities** are the modalities of the interventions, e.g. training and technical assistance.

**Indicators** are targets that show progress. When defining capacity development indicators, a distinction should be made between:

- **Process indicators:** Measure processes that have been facilitated so that dynamic changes are encouraged through implementation of participatory approaches (e.g. process through which stakeholders have been engaged in a NIPN).
- **Product indicators:** Measure concrete results that have been achieved (e.g. formulation of an answerable policy question).

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## 7. Cost capacity development actions

Costing the plan of action is an important step as it will help to take the most cost-effective decisions. For example, it may be much more cost-effective to provide on-going technical assistance and mentoring to a NIPN team involving 5 people, or an in-country training course on statistical tools for NIPN data analysis component and data analysts of the host organisation, than to fund one individual to complete a degree

course.

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