Global Support Facility for the National Information Platforms for Nutrition

First meeting of the Expert Advisory Group

MEETING ☑ OR MISSION ☐ REPORT

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Place: Agropolis International, Montpellier, France

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Content

Main conclusions

Taking into account the presentations and discussions held during the EAG meeting, the GSF will revise the presentation of the project in the form of a concept note that will clarify the scope, objectives and approach of the NIPN.

During the development and implementation of the project, particular attention should be paid to the following issues, that have been thoroughly discussed during the meeting:

- **The added value of NIPN in a environment which is rich in initiatives but poor in capacities:** how NIPN intends to create links with other initiatives around nutrition data and information at the national level, to ensure it supports their efforts rather than being competing, to build on their experience, the methods, tools and capacities they have developed.

- **How NIPN intends to get buy-in from national stakeholders while managing expectations:** initial objectives of the NIPN should be modest, in line with government priorities, NIPN should adopt a phased approach and build capacity progressively, based on needs assessments and NIPN should look for quick wins, supporting existing efforts to report and track costing as well as budget spending linked better to programme outputs.

- **How NIPN intends to build relationships of trust among national stakeholders about the use of data and multi-sectoral collaboration:** consider the need for country facilitators or "knowledge brokers" with excellent interpersonal and networking skills and experience to navigate and promote the work of a NIPN in a complex environment of stakeholders.

- **How NIPN intends to use and analyse data and information:** applying common knowledge, common analytical frameworks, published literature and existing quantitative and qualitative information about the local context should be the priority, while trying to infer causality with the data that will be available to NIPN would be very complex, if not impossible and thus misleading.

- **How NIPN intends to ensure the gains from the NIPN are sustained:** what are the proposed measures/actions to ensure sustainability of the platforms in each country.

Note that some of these issues might require further discussions of the GSF with some members of the EAG to benefit from their expertise, while the project develops and is being implementing in countries.

Summary of main discussions and recommendations

❖ **Objectives of the NIPN initiative**

The objectives of the platforms and of the project are not always consistent in different communication documents. It is not always clear how the proposed approach will try to maximize the sustainability of the platforms, nor what will be the role or added value of a NIPN in countries where there are national monitoring systems to track and report on multi-sectoral nutrition action plans. In any case, the existence and willingness of a supra-sectoral body to play a centralization role in the coordination of multi-sectoral processes will be very important, as well as alignment with other development partners' initiatives. A number of potential benefits from a NIPN were highlighted by the group, such as to:

- Promote inter-sectoral collaboration and dialogue on nutrition data and analysis, building on current initiatives and supporting government efforts
- Support a national nutrition data system that is methodical, organized, reliable, timely and accessible, based on existing data systems in different sectors
- Build the capacity of staff of national institutions to interpret information and analysis, to assess the impact of programmes, and to apply information to improve policies and programmes
- Promoting the use of harmonized variables and indicators and best practices

➡ *Recommendations:*
- *Clarify the scope, objectives and approach of the NIPN, include a theory of change, identify the conditions that need to be met for the project to have an impact and describe how the gains by NIPN will be sustained.*
- *When there are other actors or initiatives in the country (REACH, NEP, EVIDENT, SPRING, Compact2025, etc.) doing what appear to be similar things, the intention should be for them to form a mutually supportive partnership or nucleus group. In terms of added value, NIPN should support cooperation among initiatives and help expand their reach.*
- *Emphasis was put in particular on the need to build on methods already developed by other initiatives, such as important and hard-earned lessons from NEP, experience from REACH, EVIDENT, etc.*
- *In each country, it is important to manage expectations from the beginning and build a common view of what the initiative can and cannot do and within what timeframe.*
- *Allow flexibility to be able to manage requirements and expectations and to make adaptation possible along the project cycle, in terms of budget, capacity building activities, etc.*

❖ **Prioritization of questions and analysis**

National ownership of each NIPN needs to be supported and then ensured so that the questions for analysis are based on internal demand within countries: what are the most important questions for government ministries, how can they be prioritised, and what existing information and data are available already to answer the questions? This requires time and supportive efforts to build the capacity of policy makers and facilitate their engagement in both developing

questions for analysis and understanding the information provided. It was suggested that in some countries, the NIPN could start by helping to monitor nutrition-sensitive actions within each sector, not necessarily through a centralized unit, although this needs to be tailored to the country needs. There will be value in having some rapidly visible results – some 'quick wins' – such as questions for which information and existing data or analysis are readily available. This could serve to show the value of a NIPN and could engage participants and their agencies in a quickly productive process.

➡ *Recommendations:*
- *Adopt a phased approach; start with modest expectations; do needs assessments; build capacity progressively.*
- *Look for some 'quick wins', ensure the production of interim outputs.*
- *Without repeating the same analysis, there is good potential to start using information already available at country level, generated through SUN, REACH, etc., and to go further into the analysis*
- *Support existing efforts (SUN/SPRING) to report and track costing as well as budget spending linked better to programme outputs, applying the MEAL system developed by SUN, CAN develop by REACH.*
- *Build on previous work done by REACH and others.*

❖ **Facilitation of multi-sectoral dialogue**

The process of establishing a NIPN should facilitate stakeholders to come together to discuss national ambitions for NIPN, thus contributing to efforts in each country to strengthen information systems and analysis and in particular to monitor and evaluate national multi-sectoral action plans; to help build a system that is inter-sectoral in vision and scope; and to offer an organized and readily available source of information.

➡ *Recommendations:*
- *In each country, support a facilitator or "knowledge broker" with excellent interpersonal and networking skills and experience to navigate and promote the work of a NIPN in a complex environment of stakeholders. These facilitators should have the ability to maintain focus on the big picture of the country's multi-sectoral nutrition system and its stakeholders, to interact with people from many sectors and organizations and to identify and respond to their operational challenges and information needs. A specific attention has to be paid to where do they sit, which organization(s) are they associated with, how do they present themselves (formally and informally), how responsive are they (sometimes going beyond their formal mandate in order to help others), refraining from "taking credit," etc.*
- *Get an understanding of where the country stands in terms of multi-sectoral policy processes, engage sectors all together or step by step, but engage a number of key stakeholders from the start.*
- *Look at existing information such as REACH multi-stakeholder mapping in NIPN countries, whenever available, to gain a picture of the agencies involved and the information systems already in place.*

❖ **Data and information**

Other initiatives are landscaping national data and information systems, such as the SUN or REACH. Data and statistics can be a sensitive issue for ministries and government, data are a part of the power. The project could contribute to building a culture of trust and transparency about data and to promote, as much as possible, standardized methods for analysis and reporting based on best practices.

➡ *Recommendations:*
- *It is important to build relationships of trust about data.*
- *The basis of sharing data should be clear and specified from early on.*
- *There is a need to assess and understand the specific sensitiveness of data for the different stakeholders involved (ministries, non-governmental actors, international players...)*
- *The different capacities and mandates of the different ministries or institutions need to be considered: health tends to have more capacity but may not be in a position to lead multi-sectoraly while statistics office may be better placed though it needs to be given a mandate often beyond its current mandate.*
- *If a data repository is to be created, ensure that there are warnings about issues with data quality and compatibility between variables.*
- *If tools are to be created to assess the quality of data, apply all methods commonly used unless there is clear international guidance, such as work being done by TEAM.*
- *Apply standard indicators recommended by UN agencies, such as the WHO.*

❖ **Analysis**

There are a number of tools and products already existing in country that have allowed a common nutrition narrative to be developed by REACH, SUN, etc. such as a nutrition situation analysis, a nutrition common narrative, a common results framework, etc. Each NIPN needs to build on that and define how it intends to make use of such tools so as to better respond to country demand and build upon existing efforts; which analytical framework it intends to use; and how it intends to incorporate qualitative information.

The capacity of the staff of ministries and national organisations to get involved with a NIPN may be limited as different initiatives may compete for the time of a few qualified or motivated people. Analytical skills may be scarce or not well developed. In some countries the pool of data is small and analysis may already have been done. The capacity of personnel and the extent of existing analyses both need to be assessed when setting up a NIPN.

➡ *Recommendations:*
- *Consider using a networking approach to analysis rather than full-time staff*
- *Tap into expertise at local universities.*
- *Inferring causality with the data that will be available to NIPN is very complex if not impossible, thus causal analysis and (cost-)effectiveness analysis of interventions should not be an objective of the NIPN.*
- *Rather, apply common knowledge, common analytical frameworks and quantitative and qualitative information about the local context (cf. the work carried out by EVIDENT, for example).*

- *Before any novel analysis is considered, look for existing evidence, both nationally and internationally, including a literature review of contextualized evidence available for each country.*
- *Possibly repeat existing analyses to build capacity, develop understanding and create ownership of results.*
- *If NIPN decides to pursue "effectiveness analyses" anyway, it is absolutely necessary to include a detailed protocol on 1) how these analyses will be conducted and 2) how (unexpected) results will be handled.*

❖ **Outreach**

A clear understanding of who are the policy makers targeted by the project is required and should be built into the project cycle. Access to policy makers is rooted in relationships. Direct contacts between scientists, analysts and policy makers are necessary to build trust and understanding. The credibility of the organisations involved is also a very important factor for success. Information needs to be available at key milestones in the policy development process, and opportunities for communicating findings need to be identified. Communication tools should be targeted to specific stakeholders and their content needs to be appropriate for the target.

➡ *Recommendations:*
  - *A NIPN should facilitate the links between analysts and policy makers.*
  - *At the start of the project, map decision makers and identify the targeted audiences.*
  - *Identify key moments in the policy cycle as opportunities for linking evidence to policy and/or supporting the dialogue between analysts and decision makers.*
  - *Build on recognised national organisations, having a good reputation in the country.*
  - *Build relationships and trust through neutral (in terms of sector) facilitators, able to understand the invisible issues and to encourage people to share information.*
  - *In addition to the knowledge brokers to support multi-sectoral dialogue, there is a need to rely on communications experts and build capacity for communicating information to policy makers.*
  - *Produce different outputs for different target audiences, with clear messages and actionable recommendations.*

Summary of the presentation of NIPN

<u>Presentation of the NIPN initiative</u>

Pedro Campo-Llopis first introduced NIPN as a flagship initiative of the European Commission to support countries with a large burden of undernutrition to create a multi-sectoral National Information Platform for Nutrition. It is funded by the European Commission, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Then the GSF presented the approach undertaken to implement the initiative. The objective is to strengthen national capacity to manage and analyse data from all sectors which have an influence on nutrition and to disseminate and use information so as to better inform the strategic decisions countries are faced with to prevent under-nutrition and its consequences.

The initiative is aimed at low and lower middle income countries that have a high burden of stunting; that have flagged nutrition as a priority in their National Indicative Programmes with the European Union; that are members of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement; and whose government have expressed interest in the programme.

A Global Support Facility (GSF) has been created by the EU through a service contract with Agrinatura, to support the establishment and implementation of a NIPN in 8 countries, of which six are already involved: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Laos, Niger, and Uganda. The GSF is hosted by Agropolis International in Montpellier and has been assigned the following roles:

- Work with governments, national institutions, and international partners to design a functional NIPN in up to 8 countries

- Support the development by the national partners of a project proposal to be funded through the EU Delegations

- Follow-up and guide the implementation of each NIPN to ensure that its objectives are achieved

- Facilitate inter-country sharing of experiences and learning

- Ensure coordination with other initiatives and agencies

The GSF is currently a team of five, but has additional resources to commission short-term experts to support its work. It has also created a permanent Expert Advisory Group (EAG), comprising 16 experts from research and international organisations, with the following roles:

- Provide guidance and support to establish the NIPNs in partner countries

- Foster synergy and ensure information sharing among the various initiatives converging towards better nutrition for the populations of the target countries

- Provide specialist technical advice and expertise to support the GSF – and through them to partner countries – on any aspect related to the work of the NIPNs

Members of the EAG will receive GSF project updates every 6 months to be aware of progress; they will be invited to attend an annual meeting (that will include in the future representatives of NIPN from the partner countries) to share experience and provide advice; and they will be able to contribute, if interested, to discussions on specific issues through virtual meetings. In addition, they can undertake specific assignments upon request from the GSF, if interested, or suggest names of other experts to review technical documents such as terms of reference, reports, outputs of analyses carried by the platforms, briefs, etc.; to write technical guidelines; to organise a course or give a webinar, etc.

Presentation of the approach at country level

The GSF followed with the presentation of the proposed approach and design at country level.

The function of a NIPN is to inform policies and programmes for improving human nutrition by bringing together and analysing information and data from all sectors that can influence nutrition such as health, agriculture and food, water and sanitation, and social protection. To do so, the NIPN approach will provide a platform to:

- raise questions governments need to answer to develop or refine their policies and programmes;
- bring together existing information to answer those questions, including data on programmes, investments and monitoring from all sectors, with indicators of nutritional outcomes;
- analyse data and interpret results to try to answer the questions;
- disseminate findings and evidence to policy makers and programme planners.

From a structural perspective a national information platform for nutrition:

- is embedded within and builds upon national structures;
- supports existing national multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms for nutrition;
- builds upon and complements other information systems and initiatives related to the collection and use of data.

From an operational perspective, a national information platform for nutrition may consist of:

- a policy component: provided through an advisory committee of policy and programme planners from ministries, development partners and civil society organizations, facilitated by a policy advisor and supported by a communication officer;
- an analytical component: provided through an analysis unit, hosted by a national institution such as a bureau of statistics, with contributions from ministries and research organisations to help with interpreting results, and supported by a technical advisor.
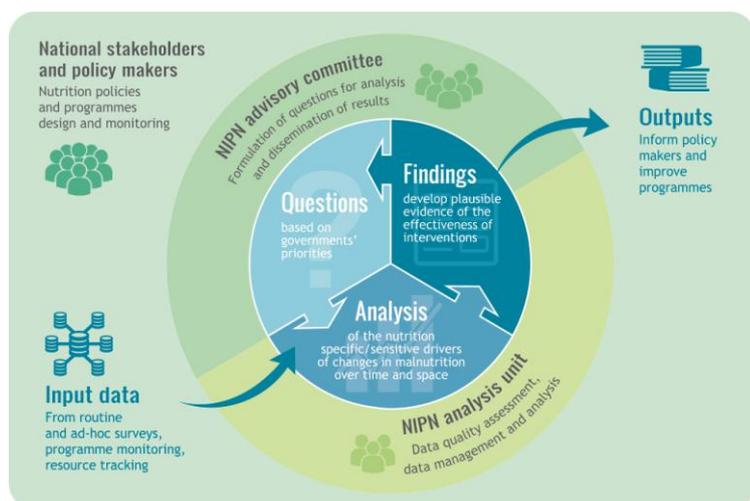
The questions for analysis will be posed by the advisory committee, based on the government's priorities and needs. This will determine the information to be found or the data required for analysis. The findings will aim to inform policy makers and program planners and may contribute to the formulation of new questions for analysis, as illustrated in the diagram. The advisory committee constitutes the main link between the analysis unit and policy makers and stakeholders in nutrition.

The advisory committee will ensure the engagement and participation of all sectors; develop questions for analysis based on needs of policy-makers and programme planners in all sectors; decide on priorities for analysis; contribute to interpreting analysis; and report to a national inter-sectoral committee for nutrition, if it exists.

The analysis unit should ideally have a mandate to collect and aggregate data; skills in data analysis; bring in people with skills in interpreting analysis; be 'data neutral', so having no sectoral specialization; and have the ability to disseminate findings in format suitable for the audience.

Situation in partner countries

	Bangladesh	Ethiopia	Kenya	Laos	Niger	Uganda
National governance structure	Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (being revitalised) to guide National Plan of Action for Nutrition. Technical subcommittees being re-formed	National Nutrition Programme (NNP) now in Phase II. National Nutrition Coordination Body (NNCB) & National Nutrition Technical Committee (NNTC)	A Food Security and Nutrition bill is before Parliament Proposes an inter-sectoral National Council, based in office of Prime Minister, with CEO and representatives from line ministries	National Plan of Action for Nutrition and Inter-sectoral National Nutrition Council.	Secretariat of Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens (3N) Multi-sectoral Committee of Strategic Axis 4 (CMPS 4) Multi-sectoral Nutrition Action Plan (PASN) in the making (2016) M&E Multi-sectoral working group, though not decentralised	Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP) 2011-16, being extended. UNAP inter-sectoral Secretariat in the Office of the Prime Minister
Comprehensive Africa Development Programme (CAADP)	Yes. Reviewed in 2010, up to 2015	Yes, 2011, reviewed in 2015 – nutrition sensitive	2010	Not applicable	Yes, 2011- no nutrition sensitive target	Yes, 2011, reviewed 2014 – nutrition sensitive
CAADP	Yes. Reviewed in 2010, up to 2015	Yes, 2011, reviewed in 2015 – nutrition sensitive	Yes, 2010	Not found	Yes, 2011- no nutrition sensitive target	Yes, 2011, reviewed 2014 – nutrition sensitive
Nutrition sensitive targets		Yes, revised for NNP Phase II AGP II & PSNP: Programme Monitoring (MoA/partners) & evaluation by IFPRI	Not yet. Complicated by devolution of budgets to 46 counties		Process targets	Yes, since start of UNAP
NIPN likely institutional arrangements	Helen Keller International to lead consortium and provide technical advice to Analysis Unit in Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies to provide policy advisors for national technical advisory committee perhaps based in General Economics Division of Ministry of Planning	Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), responsible for M&E and Research Group of the NNP Phase II	Leadership of nutrition: Ministry of Health Analytical capacity: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Ministry of Devolution and Planning may host advisory committee. Policy partner to be identified.	Analysis unit in the National Economic Research Council, a parastatal body under the Ministry of Planning. Policy unit likely in the Secretariat of the National Nutrition Council. Project to be managed by UNICEF	Strategic leadership: 3N Analysis unit : Institut des Statistiques du Niger (INS)	Policy Unit in the Secretariat of UNAP in P.M.'s office Analysis unit in the Uganda Bureau of Statistics
NIPN likely advisory committee	National Technical Advisory Committee to be chaired by Ministry of Health (to help revitalize the BNNC)	Either a working group of NNP committee or an ad hoc committee that reports to NNTC	Ideally as sub-committee of National Council, when created. Until then perhaps in Ministry of Devolution and Planning	Likely through the Secretariat of the National Nutrition Council	Multi-sectoral working group being worked out (existing or ad hoc) Coordination through the Secretariat of 3N	Inter-sectoral Technical Advisory Committee to advise on analysis, coordinated by Secretariat of UNAP
Opportunities	FAO data platform (MUCH: Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge) in the Ministry of Food	National Information System: a priority of the NNP-II Complementarity with the health & nutrition monitoring system (UNISE)	Oxford University undertaking data analysis	FAO supporting mapping unit in Ministry of Agriculture	Collaboration 3N/INS Elaboration of the action plan for nutrition security (PASN): focal persons have been identified in each sector	
Challenges		Engagement of sectors beyond health M&E framework: resources allocated by sector MoA effective capacities for nutrition	Engaging all sectors without inter-sectoral coordination Who will make decision about placement of NIPN?	Ministries can only provide 60% of records in any data set	Data from the Early Warning System (SAP) Consistency of indicators, especially food security Data quality Ministries' capacities	Focus on Karamoja and West Nile for programmes and data; rest of country poorly covered

Main challenges identified by the GSF

The GSF ended their presentation with a list of challenges identified in relation to the implementation of NIPNs:

- Ensuring high-level government commitments to setting-up the NIPN

- Ensuring that each NIPN is inter-sectoral in both the advisory group and the analysis unit and links to an existing inter-sectoral structure

- Engaging sectors other than health, especially agriculture

- Understanding what are the vested interests for improved analysis for decision making in nutrition and therefore how to engage the agencies involved

- Designing the place and role of a NIPN in countries that have as priority a centralised monitoring system to track national plans (Ethiopia, Niger) versus countries that don't have such a national priority

- Building a suitable consortium of organisations to implement the project (see the inception report for more information about "suitability" criteria)

- Designing the place and role of a NIPN in the presence of other data initiatives, such as HMIS 'dashboards' or web sites of health and nutrition statistics

- Ensuring a suitable host institution for the analysis unit when the bureau of statistics is not chosen or not interested

- Ensuring that the analysis unit can engage with and obtain data from all sectors

- Ensuring that staff for NIPN can be provided by ministries to the analysis unit

- Ensuring that a senior technical advisor and a policy advisor can be hired in each country

- Ensuring that arrangements are in place so that disposable resources are allocated transparently and will benefit all partners

- Ensuring the sustainability of the platforms

Summary of presentations of other initiatives relevant to the work of NIPN

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning in the SUN Movement, by Patrizia Fracassi, SUN Movement Secretariat

Today 57 countries are leading a global movement for Scaling Up Nutrition. In 22 SUN countries all three forms of undernutrition are above the level of public health concern (but have no significant adult overweight or obesity), while 13 SUN countries have all forms of malnutrition above the level of public health concern. The SUN approach is based on a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder platform to coordinate efforts across sectors for coherent policies and plans to prevent malnutrition, led by SUN governments focal points.

To deliver results for nutrition, countries continuously assess changes in:
- All forms of malnutrition
- Diet and feeding practices
- Programmes and investments
- Institutional arrangements

With data that are:
- Disaggregated
- Timely
- From multiple sources

In terms of data and information gaps, SUN priorities are to:
1. Annually review progresses (institutional transformations) in SUN Countries
2. Collate interventions' cost estimates included in national plans
3. Investigate nutrition-relevant spending in national budgets
   - Program description
   - Ministries, Departments and Agencies
   - Specific and sensitive programmes
   - Sectors and typologies of programmes
   - Trends over years
   - Allocations versus expenditures
   - Sources of funds
4. Map national information systems in SUN countries (started June 2016)

Nutrition Information System Index: Indicator Groups
- Government Commitment
  - Agreed M&E Framework
  - Global impact targets
  - Institutionalization of nutrition information systems
- National Surveys
  - Demographic & health surveys (DHS, MICS, SMART)
  - Micronutrient surveys
  - Living Standard Measurement Studies (World Bank)
  - Food security and vulnerability assessments (WFP)
- Routine/program Monitoring

- ▪ Nutrition specific program performance monitoring
- ▪ Sectoral platforms with nutrition-relevant indicators

Priorities for 2016/2017:
- Complete the Nutrition Information System (NIS) mapping with key sectoral partners and share the database with Government Focal Points and in-country teams to develop the NIS Index.
- Document lessons from existing/funded initiatives, which include NIPN, on how to set-up a national information platform for nutrition, building on what is already existing.
- Document lessons from countries on how to link information on implementation and spending with changes in results and impacts (on-going documentation work in four countries).
- Agree on modalities for supporting and strengthening information systems/platforms in SUN countries.

Update on the monitoring, evaluation and learning system:
- The SUN Movement Secretariat is defining a core layer of standardized indicators to enable countries in the Movement to monitor, assess and document how their commitments translate into results for better nutritional impacts.
- The SUN Movement Secretariat is also working with the four global Networks and with providers of technical assistance to agree on a mutual accountability framework to monitor the performance of the SUN Movement Support System.
- A draft working paper on the Monitoring, evaluating, accountability and learning (MEAL) will be circulated by the end of December 2016.

Overview of the WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM), by Julia Krasevec, UNICEF/TEAM Secretariat

TEAM is an independent thematic group to support and advise UNICEF and the WHO and, through them, national governments, in their priorities on global nutrition monitoring. TEAM work plan outputs will also serve as global public goods that will be relevant to member states and various partners and agencies.

TEAM's priorities for the first 2 years were defined according to:
- Findings from partner meetings on nutrition data gaps in June 2015 and February 2016
- World Health Assembly (WHA) monitoring priorities (http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/governance/wha/en/)
- Issues faced by UNICEF and WHO on the global nutrition database and reporting related tasks

The work plan of TEAM is the following:
1. WHA nutrition targets – operationalization of country level monitoring and reporting
2. Review of prevalence level ranges for public health significance of malnutrition (this task will be completed by the end of 2016)
3. Global monitoring (on/off course) rules for WHA targets
4. Anthropometry data quality – revised and expanded WHO guidelines (on-going)
5. Development of a research agenda for the next 5 years
6. Coordinate with other groups working on nutrition monitoring

- Liaise with other monitoring groups/initiatives on cross sectoral topics (e.g. NIPN, The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) and Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) Strategic Advisory Group) (ongoing)
- Invite partners to provide input, join working groups, etc. (e.g. monitoring networks, academic and independent expert groups, donors, bilateral agencies, etc.) (ongoing)

National Evaluation Platform: an introduction, by Rebecca Heidkamp, Johns Hopkins University (JHU)

The National Evaluation Platform is a rigorous new approach to compiling and analysing health and nutrition data from diverse sources so that countries can get strategic, evidence-based answers to their most pressing program and policy questions. It has been funded for 3 years by the Canadian government, with a no-cost extension to the end of 2017. The NIPN initiative is based on the work of the NEP.

The principles on which the NEP is based are: government-led and owned; builds on existing data systems; facilitates reporting for accountability; and provides timely answers to decision-makers about what health and nutrition interventions work to improve nutrition and prevent deaths.

The focus is on data on the nutrition of mothers and young children and on the programmes and contextual factors that influence it. It brings together summary data by district from nutrition surveys (DHS, SMART), health information systems and on other factors, all of which are assessed for quality. The data allows comparisons between districts, the analysis of trends, and applies the Lives Saved Modelling Tool, based on a defined methodology, to estimate the effect of interventions to prevent child deaths.

In each country there is an: Advisory Committee of policy makers, implementers and researchers supported by development partners, and a Technical Task Team to undertake analysis supported by scientific partners. The teams in each country are supported by a resident advisor from JHU.

The data system and the skills of staff are built progressively in cycles: questions from the advisory committee; data mapping and quality assessment; data analysis; then interpreting and communicating findings.

In terms of technical development, the NEP uses existing tools whenever possible and develops new tools when needed, such as a tool to analyse causal pathways to impact; an application to import data from the DHIS-2 system; and an interface to R software that allows standardised analyses to be done by simple changes to variable names and produces standard graphs.

Major attention has been paid to capacity building by delivering a core curriculum, by tailored training in countries, and by the support provided by the resident advisor backed up by the team at JHU.

The findings of the NEPs have been communicated nationally and internationally.

The project has been independently evaluated and is monitored internally.

Seven key lessons have been identified, that can be useful for the NIPN initiative:
1. Seeing is believing. Quick wins are needed to demonstrate the concept and potential.
2. Access to data and policy makers is rooted in relationships: the resident advisors develop relationships and may assist with stakeholder's other priorities if feasible

3. Expect participation to be variable: secure a core team; engage early adopters and allow others to join; repeat core teaching; and demonstrate the relevance of core skills.
4. Put the government at the forefront, to create ownership.
5. Defining questions and communicating findings are the hardest steps in the cycle.
6. Timing is important: choose topics well; expect delays; and produce useful interim products.
7. Understand that others may enjoy the process.

How to foster multi-sectoral cooperation among policy-makers: experience from REACH, by Nicolas Bidault, REACH

Building a common data agenda for nutrition takes a coordinated, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder process with key milestones:
1. Multi-sectoral nutrition situation analysis
2. Identification of priority actions in nutrition
3. Definition of data, identification of data needs and bringing it all together to monitor progress of priority actions over time
4. Annual performance reviews, analysis of trend over time and coverage

1. **Using a multi-sectoral nutrition situation analysis to identify the key nutrition problems in country:**

A multi-sectoral nutrition analysis (REACH nutrition overview):
➢ Brings sectors together to identify basic, underlying and immediate causes of malnutrition (applying the UNICEF conceptual framework of the causes of malnutrition)
➢ Identifies the main nutrition problems in a country at national and sub-national levels, considering possible disparities e.g. urban/rural, by sex, etc.
➢ Make recommendations to address issues.

How?:
➢ By extracting secondary data from surveys and reports e.g. DHS, MICS, CSFVA
➢ By working with key technical partners (often UNN/REACH support) across multiple sectors to ensure the most relevant data are collected, analysed and presented

Challenges:
➢ Analysis often done for specific a project/programme or sector, not a holistic view
➢ Capacity to analyse and link nutrition outcomes and underlying causes is limited
➢ Need convener and technical lead
➢ Getting government validation and ownership of the products.

Completed REACH nutrition overviews:
➢ Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Lao PDR, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda

2. **Building a consensus on priority actions requires a multi-sector, multi-stakeholder process:**
➢ Global and country resources are leveraged to define the priority actions to be monitored
➢ Reaching a consensus involves a facilitated process with stakeholders

Challenges:
➢ Ensure the meaningful representation of sectors and institutions
➢ Ensure the right balance between nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive actions

- ➢ Using advanced tools for health sector analysis e.g. OneHealth + LiST
- ➢ Bringing financial data on costs and expenditure

Completed:
- ➢ Bangladesh (support UNICEF, WB, FAO), Niger (3N + UNN + REACH, bottom up approach), Sudan (MoH, UNICEF, WFP)

3. **The tool contains pre-defined actions based on the Compendium for Actions in Nutrition (CAN) across multiple sectors that can be adapted to each country's needs and priorities.**

Identified priority actions and indicators may come from many sources – with potential data gaps that need to be identified.

Challenges:
- ➢ Getting the info on government as a main stakeholder is difficult; often the government unable to give data outside health sector
- ➢ Government unwilling to make available the data

Completed: Rwanda

4. **Analysing and interpreting nutrition data at key milestones in the policy and planning management cycle**

Challenges:
- ➢ Analyse and interpret data with a multi-sectoral lens e.g. data dashboard, automated reports
- ➢ Build on sectoral analysis and expertise
- ➢ Bring stakeholders together to review and assess the nutrition situation and progress made on priority actions can happen through:
  - ▪ Sector and multi-sector reviews e.g. Tanzania's Annual Joint Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Review
  - ▪ Reviews of policy and plans e.g. Mali's mid-term plan review, Niger's policy and plan review
  - ▪ Nutrition Forum e.g. Chad

Bringing sectors and stakeholders together around nutrition data – REACH Stakeholder & Nutrition Action Mapping

For a pre-defined set of priority actions for nutrition, the mapping collects information on:
- ➢ Who is doing what and where
- ➢ How many beneficiaries are being reached nationally and sub-nationally
- ➢ Through which delivery mechanisms are actions taking place.

How?:
- ➢ Stakeholders from government, civil society, donor organizations and the United Nations come together to define the mapping needs and expected outputs
- ➢ Stakeholders provide inputs to the mapping, reporting on priority actions, beneficiaries and delivery mechanisms
- ➢ Data are placed in a tool with automated calculation features to support analysis and visualization of reports

Completed:
- ➢ National mapping: Tanzania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Rwanda and Lao PDR

- ➢ Sub-national mapping: Ghana and Uganda
- ➢ Currently mapping: Mali, Tanzania (*2nd round*), Myanmar, Egypt
- ➢ Forthcoming: Burundi, Haiti, Lao PDR (*2nd round*), Web-based tool (DHIS2)

Experiences of a nutrition surveillance project in Bangladesh, by Jillian Waid, Helen Keller International, Bangladesh

The Nutrition Surveillance Project began in 1990 in food insecure areas of Bangladesh as repeated cross-sectional surveys six time a year in sentinel sub-districts, funded by USAID. The number of sites grew until 1997 when the sites were reorganised into 24 fixed sub-districts until 2003 when 4 sites in the Chittagong Hill Tracts were added. Funding was provided from 2002 until 2006 by the Royal Dutch Embassy. Surveillance stopped in 2006.

The surveillance system changed in 2010 with new funding until 2015 from the European Union to become a Food Security and Nutrition Surveillance system in six agro-ecological zones in which data were collected three times a year. The project was done in collaboration with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and BRAC University School of Public Health.

Over the years there have been changes in the households sampled and indicators recorded, but data on anthropometric indicators on children and on morbidity, coping practices and market prices have been constant.

These existing data could be used in a NIPN to add data on weather, geology and agriculture, fisheries and livestock to extend the potential analysis. Areas could be standardised between both surveillance systems and pseudo-panels created to analyse data on cohorts by date of birth to understand the time lag between exposures and outcomes.

Practical considerations for communicating evidence to policy makers: Preliminary findings identifying best practices for conveying research findings to policy makers, by Kat Pittore, Nutrition Convenor, Institute for Development Studies

Since the goal of NIPN is to inform policy makers with evidence generated through the analysis of data and information, the question of how to reach those policy makers in terms of communication means is key. One of the outputs of the NIPNs will be policy briefs.

Three elements: context, links and evidence must be taken into account when developing policy focused materials.

Context

- Framing: the importance of the external frame "public portrayals of the issue in ways that resonate with external audiences, especially political leaders who control resources" (Shiffman and Smith, 2007)
- Some framings are more likely to lead to attention and resources (Shiffman 2016)
- Demand for research from policy makers is a key element in terms of research being used; when policy makers have commissioned research, they are much less likely to ignore the findings (Court and Young 2003)
- Politics and the political context matter. The GSF will support prioritization of questions for analysis: how will politics feature?

16

- "Policy makers" are not a homogeneous group: their priorities, needs and use for information will vary
- Timing is important, including knowledge and alignment with the policy process (Innvaer et al. 2002)
- Have actionable recommendations: "consumers [policy makers] are not interested in details, they only want to know what works" (Petticrew 2004)

Links between the political and scientific communities

- Direct contact between researchers and policy makers throughout the research process, is critically important. This builds a culture of trust, legitimacy, and openness (Petticrew 2004, Mitton et al. 2007; Langer, Tripney and Gough 2016).
- Use the correct messenger to impart the findings
- Research communication is an integral part of the process.

Evidence

- The credibility of the organization matters
- Develop "sticky" and "portable" messages
- Keep it simple, but not simplistic
- Tell stories, give examples
- Assemble the evidence jigsaw for policy makers
- Use visuals.

Knowledge, Policy and Planning: Exploring and Strengthening the Connections, by David Pelletier, Cornell University

Different kinds of knowledge, data and capacity are needed along the policy cycle: advocacy, awareness, agenda setting, commitment-building, problem identification, policy development, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation, then learning and adaptation.

Most countries today have developed multi-sectoral nutrition action plans and sectoral strategies for nutrition. The sectoral strategies are implemented and monitored with sector-specific indicators; sectoral learning and adaptation occurs; and then multi-sectoral nutrition coordinating structures share progress and establish accountability at national and sub-national level.

There are a number of categories of decisions and processes in the nutrition space, as well as distinctive categories of knowledge to assist and inform decisions and processes such as: global public goods; contextual challenges and bottlenecks; tacit and explicit knowledge; and contextual knowledge. It is then important to link knowledge to decisions and processes: who to inform and how?

The challenges for capacity lie at every level: individual, organisational, system, governance and political economy.

Experience from the UNICEF/EU African Nutrition Partnership (ANSP) project

Objectives of the project:
1. Up-stream policy development and nutrition security awareness
2. Institutional development and capacity building
3. Develop useful information systems and data analysis

4. Scale-up multi-sectoral interventions

Cornell's role:
1. Provide strategic guidance and support to ANSP countries
2. Facilitate co-learning and co-building of the multi-sectoral nutrition systems with partners:
   ▪ Bring an "insider/outsider" perspective
   ▪ Bring a 'systems lens' to multi-sectoral nutrition
   ▪ Play multiple roles as boundary-crossing agent, knowledge broker, alliance broker, learning and reflection facilitator, etc.
3. Record the lessons and experiences for external audiences

Complex adaptive systems, such as a multi-sectoral nutrition system, are challenging because:
1. They have no central control; multi-directional influences
2. The participants are often orientated to their own goals, interests and information
3. There is self-organization and the emergence of relationships and actions
4. There is interaction, learning and adaptation or adjustment among many participants.

Examples of markers from Ethiopia to monitor progress in multi-sectoral coordination:
1. Fully staffed and functioning secretariat in the Ministry of Health, including a staff member dedicated to multi-sectoral coordination
2. Focal points assigned to the National Nutrition Technical Committee by all federal ministries
3. Regular, well-attended, well-prepared and well-documented meetings of the NNTC/NNCB
4. Working groups formed for health, agriculture and education ministries at federal level, with terms of reference and reporting guidelines with indicators for progress in identifying nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions as well as bottlenecks, partners involved and responsibilities
5. Well prepared, attended and implemented launches in all regions
6. Core support teams formed in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR, which included UNICEF, the ENGINE project and others, as appropriate
7. Regional bodies (NTCs/RNCBs) formed in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR with ToRs, focal points assigned to committees and working groups created for health, agriculture and education (initially)
8. Capacity building and action planning workshops held in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR
9. Nutrition activities included in regional work plans in health, agriculture and education sectors in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR by the target of June 2014
10. Reporting guidelines and templates developed for use at sub-national levels, to report progress in implementing nutrition activities, bottlenecks, partners involved and support needed.

Boundary-spanning strategies and tactics

1. Boundary-crossing orientation, values and strategies include: embeddedness and networking in stakeholder community; reinforcing the norm of country owned/country led; strengthening government ownership of the agenda; continuous advocacy with the sectors; continuous assessment, feedback and follow-up; reflective exercises with stakeholders; issue selection at national and sub-national levels; responsive capacity building; doing favours to build good will; credit-giving, not credit-taking; risk taking; knowledge brokering; bridging coordination gaps; clarifying roles and responsibilities; engaging effective consultants.

2. Relationships: alliance building at all levels and in all sectors; maintaining strategic alliances; effective collaboration with the MSN "core group" ; managing misunderstandings and disagreements among stakeholders.

3. Using opportunities; experience-sharing visits; venue shopping; critical moments; critical deadlines; candid reporting to the high level bodies; attendance of high level officials at global meetings; and using nutrition champions.

4. Tools and activities: decision making tools; sensitizing tools; SWOT analysis; progress markers; innovative workshop tools; using evidence; effective presentations; goal-oriented sensitization workshops and meetings; goal-oriented district and national level workshops for alignment of sectors and partners.

Key messages

1. The UNICEF conceptual framework and other global knowledge, combined with country contextualization and deliberation, is the basis for policy development and creating multi-sectoral plans, strategies and programmes for nutrition; there is no need to demonstrate nutrition causes, determinants or drivers in each country individually.
2. Most SUN countries are in the implementation phase and most are struggling with diverse challenges.
3. For the first several years this involves relatively basic 'progress markers' to track each sector's efforts to operationalize their roles, to complement the sector specific indicators we usually focus on.
4. Developing progress markers is intimately connected with identifying and addressing bottlenecks and challenges in each sector and in multi-sectoral coordination activities
5. One or more "neutral" facilitators, boundary spanners or knowledge brokers is a vital asset for countries, to augment the very limited government capacity for playing this role

Appendix 1: Agenda of the meeting

Thursday, September, 29th

12:00	Lunch at Agropolis International in Room "Vanille", external building, ground floor

13:30   Meeting in Room "Salle du Conseil" main building, second floor

Welcome addresses by *Philippe Petithuguenin,* Vice-President, on behalf of Agrinatura and Agropolis International, *Pedro Campo-Llopis,* Head of Sector – Nutrition – EC-DG DEVCO, on behalf of the European Union and *Andrew Hall*, on behalf of the GSF team

14:00   Personal introductions by GSF, Experts, Donors and Observers

14:30   Presentation of the NIPN initiative and progress so far

Chaired by *Mélanie Broin*, GSF

- Introduction by *Andrew Hall*, GSF
- NIPN initiative: approach to implementation by *Mélanie Broin*, GSF
- NIPNs: principles and proposed operational structure by *Andrew Hall,* GSF
- NIPNs in countries: Bangladesh, Uganda, Ethiopia, Niger, Kenya, Laos by *Andrew Hall* and *Perrine Geniez,* GSF
- Main challenges by *Andrew Hall* and *Perrine Geniez*, GSF

Discussion

Announcement on practical information by *Elise Jalliet*, GSF

16:00	Coffee break on the Mezzanine, main building, intermediate floor

16:30   Presentation and discussion about the role of the expert group and the proposed working methods by *Mélanie Broin,* GSF

17:00   Other initiatives on data for nutrition

Chaired by *Andrew Hall*, GSF

- Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning in the SUN Movement
  by *Patrizia Fracassi,* SUN Secretariat
- Overview of the Technical Expert Advisory Group on Nutrition Monitoring (TEAM)
  by *Julia Krasevec,* UNICEF
- Concept and aims of the Nutrition Evaluation Platform (NEP)
  by *Rebecca Heidkamp,* Johns Hopkins University

18:30   End of the first day meeting

20:00	Dinner in town at "Brasserie du Théâtre", 22 Boulevard Victor Hugo, Montpellier

Friday, September, 30th

09:00   Meeting in Room "Salle du Conseil" main building, second floor

09:00-09:15   Introduction to the day by *Andrew Hall*, GSF

09:15-11:00   Working session 1: How can NIPN serve to engage all sectors and how such engagement can inform the analysis undertaken for policy uptake?
- Introduction by *Perrine Geniez,* GSF
- Presentation by *Nicolas Bidault*, REACH: How to foster multisectoral cooperation among policy makers?
- Presentation by *Rebecca Heidkamp,* Johns Hopkins University: Experience from the NEP: lessons learnt, successes and challenges from the health sector
- Main challenges by *Perrine Geniez*, GSF
- Discussion

11:00-11:30   Coffee break on the Mezzanine, main building, intermediate floor

11:30-13:15   Working session 2: What are the main likely issues for finding and obtaining data and for its analysis?
- Introduction by *Andrew Hall,* GSF
- Presentation by *Milko Skofic*, GSF: Conceptual tool for a repository of datasets
- Presentation by *Jillian Waid,* Helen Keller International, Bangladesh: Experiences of a nutrition surveillance project in Bangladesh
- Main challenges by *Andrew Hall*, GSF
- Discussion

13:15-14:30   Lunch break in Room "Vanille", external building, ground floor

14:30-15:45   Session 3: The use of information to develop policies and programmes for nutrition Chaired by *Perrine Geniez*, GSF
- Practical considerations for communicating evidence to policy makers: Preliminary findings identifying best practices for conveying research findings to policy makers
  by *Kat Pittore,* Institute of Development Studies
- Knowledge, Policy and Planning: Exploring and Strengthening the Connections by *David Pelletier,* Cornell University

15:45-16:15   Closing session

- Summary of discussions and conclusion by *Andrew Hall*, GSF
- Closing remarks by donors' representatives