



NiPN

National Information
Platforms for Nutrition

The NIPN Initiative

Strengthening capacity to analyse data
to track progress, inform policies
and improve programmes
for better nutrition



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Evidence-based decision making is a systematic process of identifying what decision-makers need to know, identifying the evidence to answer their questions using local data and supporting them to make informed choices regarding what nutrition actions to scale-up, and how best to do so. (SUN in practice n°5, April 2016)

The NIPN initiative of the European Commission aims to support countries with a large burden of undernutrition to create a country-led and country-owned multi-sectoral National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN). A NIPN will provide a hub to facilitate multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogue around sources of data and information for nutrition and their use for the design of evidence-based policies.

The initiative will contribute to strengthening national capacity to manage and analyse information and 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 undernutrition and its consequences.

The initiative is aimed at European Union partner countries that are members of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and are committed to deliver evidence-based programmes and interventions to improve human nutrition. It is funded by the European Commission, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

NATIONAL INFORMATION PLATFORM FOR NUTRITION: WHAT FOR?

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF A NIPN:

- **Maximise the analysis and interpretation** of existing information and data on nutrition to improve understanding of the factors that influence it, both nationally and locally
- **Identify gaps in information** that need to be filled and problems with the consistency and quality of data
- **Build plausible arguments** about the effectiveness of interventions, programmes, approaches and investments to prevent malnutrition
- **Contribute to monitoring national and sub-national progress** in preventing malnutrition and to strengthening accountability of governments and donors to meet their commitments

The function of a National Information Platform for Nutrition 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, food security, water, 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 information** needed to answer those questions including published literature, contextual information and data on programmes and investments from all sectors;
- » **analyse existing data and interpret results** in the light of current knowledge to try to answer the questions;
- » **disseminate findings and evidence** to policy makers and programme planners.

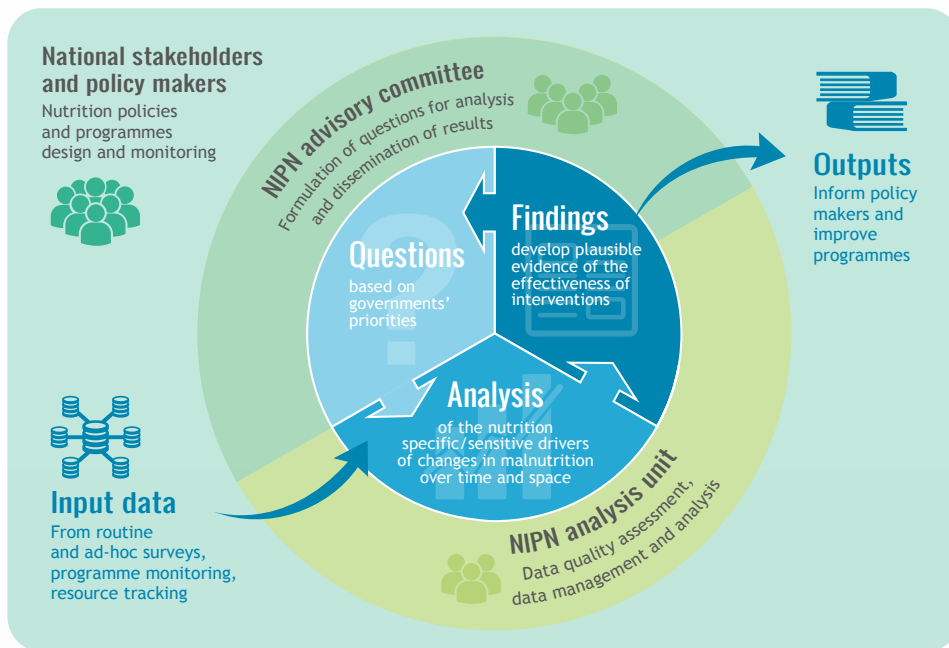
NIPN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » **Country-owned:** design of platform and analysis of data embedded within national structures
- » **Sensitive to context:** analysis meets each country's needs and priorities
- » **Builds upon what exists:** makes the best use of current information systems and existing coordination mechanisms
- » **Strengthens capacity:** supports the skills, means and analytical methods to achieve objectives
- » **Adds value:** complements or is synergistic with other initiatives, avoiding the duplication of efforts
- » **Enhances multi-sectoral efforts:** supports national policies and multi-sectoral plans for better nutrition

WHAT DOES A NIPN LOOK LIKE?

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, supported by a policy facilitator, to define priorities for the work of the platform according to government needs;
- » **a technical component**, provided through an **analysis unit**, hosted by a national institution such as a national office of statistics and supported by a technical advisor, to gather data and information and perform analysis and interpretation, with contributions from ministries and research organisations.



HOW DOES A NIPN WORK?

A NIPN operates through a cyclic process: the questions for analysis are posed by the advisory committee, based on the government's priorities and needs. They 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.

The advisory committee constitutes the main link between the analysis unit and policy makers and stakeholders in nutrition.

HOW MIGHT A NIPN BE USED BY A GOVERNMENT?

EXAMPLES OF A GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES:

- Policy dialogue across sectors
- Policy development
- Programme planning and monitoring
- Evaluation of programmes and investments
- Understanding of the drivers of trends in time and geographical differences in undernutrition
- Advocacy and mobilisation of communities
- Analysis and research

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION AND DATA TO INCLUDE:

- Common knowledge and published literature
- Nutrition outcome indicators: prevalence of stunted, wasted, anaemic children and mothers
- Food security indicators: diet, food prices, women's empowerment
- Context: demography, assets, income, education, climate, environment, culture, services
- Policies and programmes in various sectors: inputs, implementation processes, outputs and outcomes

POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS TO NIPN OUTPUTS:

- Not all questions can be answered immediately: priorities will need to be set
- There will be gaps in information and data: the NIPN is likely to identify needs for information and inconsistencies in data
- The potential to understand the causes of malnutrition and the reasons for improvements will depend on the quality, geographic spread and frequency of the data available

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A NIPN?

Countries with a National Information Platform for Nutrition will eventually make the most of available information and data on nutrition. The analyses undertaken by the platform will contribute to policies and programmes based on the best evidence gained from both international and national experiences about what interventions or combinations of interventions have the most impact, depending on context, and on what factors influence the effectiveness of interventions. This would enable governments to prioritise and scale-up those interventions and approaches that would be most likely to reduce under-nutrition successfully in specific settings. Ultimately, NIPN will support the development of better policies and programmes to improve human nutrition and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS FROM A NIPN

- **Existing information and data** from all sectors and from all levels of government are gathered to create a repository that acts as a resource for information and analysis
- **The NIPN provides information and analysis** at the request of government and other stakeholders, driven largely by questions to inform policies and programmes
- **Regular reports, policy briefs and bespoke documents** are produced and disseminated that meet the needs and technical understanding of different audiences
- **Summary statistics** are provided to data dashboards and government information systems

WHAT SUPPORT DOES THE NIPN INITIATIVE OFFER?

The organizations identified and approved by the national government to host, run and support the policy and technical components of the NIPN will benefit from financial support provided by the project through the Delegation of the European Union, to strengthen their capacity to manage, analyse, interpret, disseminate and use information for decision making. The preliminary stages in implementing a platform include:

- » **Introducing the concept to stakeholders** in each country and obtaining their engagement.
- » **Identifying the organisations** that will be responsible for hosting and implementing the policy and technical components of the NIPN, including the agency to lead the project and manage the funds and the agencies to provide support and technical assistance.
- » **Writing a project proposal to implement the NIPN**, describing the specific objectives and activities to be undertaken, the roles and responsibilities of each partner, the use of project funds and a plan for sustainability, all to be approved by the EU Delegation in country, which will fund the project through a contract with the lead organisation.

Once funds are secured, activities may include:

- » **Structuring the NIPN:** setting-up the governance structure and mechanisms; identifying policy makers and programme planners and partners to participate in the advisory committee; identifying staff / organizations to work within/with the analysis unit; and assigning staff to coordinate the platform activities and facilitate and support the policy and analysis processes.
- » **Defining the specific objectives of the NIPN:** undertaking participatory needs assessments and setting priorities; developing annual workplans and capacity building plans; strengthening capacity of staff of the advisory committee to undertake evidence-based policy development.
- » **Creating a data repository:** identifying sources of data; defining the rules and agreements needed for collaboration and to use the data; building the capacity of staff of the analysis unit to manage data and assess its quality; organising and managing data.
- » **Analysing data and information:** working on tasks identified by the advisory committee to inform policies and programmes and strengthening the capacity of members of the analysis unit to do so.
- » **Disseminating information:** identifying methods, channels and opportunities to disseminate information to stakeholders; strengthening capacity within the analysis and policy components to translate complex findings into simple messages that have direct relevance to policies; releasing outputs in the form of reports, policy briefs and messages.

EXPECTED RESULTS AT GLOBAL LEVEL

- **Consistency in the principles** by which NIPNs operate
- Consistency and **application of best practices** in data quality, management and analysis
- Consistency and **harmonisation of measurements, variables and indicators**
- **Provision of a method** to set up a NIPN with key lessons learnt from countries

THE NIPN GLOBAL SUPPORT FACILITY

At the international level, a Global Support Facility (GSF) established by the EU will assist countries and implementing partners to design and operate each national platform and develop common tools. The GSF will also support countries to share their experiences through meetings and a web platform and ensure coordination with other initiatives at the global level. The GSF is managed by Agrinatura, an alliance of European institutions, and is hosted by Agropolis International in Montpellier, France. In order to broaden the scope of expertise available to support countries, an Expert Advisory Group has been set up by the GSF, consisting of specialists and representatives of key organizations in the field of nutrition.

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