European Commission

Strengthening the
monitoring
of a national multi-sectoral nutrition plan

Lessons from the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) in Côte d'Ivoire

International Partnerships

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Acknowledgements

About the NIPN Initiative

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

Capacity for Nutrition (C4N) is an action funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and implemented by Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) as part of the Knowledge for Nutrition Programme (K4N). C4N has a Global Coordination unit to coordinate the NIPN platforms across various countries, which has led the development of this report.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

Acronym	French	English
C4N	Capacité pour la Nutrition	Capacity for Nutrition
CCSE	Cadre Commun de Suivi Evaluation : cadre de référence du plan de suivi et évaluation du PNMN	Common Results Framework of the PNMN.
CNN	Conseil National pour la Nutrition	National Nutrition Council
EUD	Délégation de l'Union Européenne en Côte d'Ivoire	European Union Delegation in Côte d'Ivoire
FAO-FIRST	Programme Impact sur la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle, résilience, durabilité et transformation	Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme
M&E	Suivi et Evaluation	Monitoring and Evaluation
NIPN	Plateforme National d'Information pour la Nutrition https://www.nipn-nutrition-platforms.org/?lang=fr	National Information Platform for Nutrition https://www.nipn-nutrition-platforms.org/
INS	Institut National de la Statistique de Côte d'Ivoire. http://www.ins.ci/n/	National Statistical Office of Côte d'Ivoire. http://www.ins.ci/n/
PNMIN	Plateforme National Multi-sectorielle d'Information pour la Nutrition (nom de la NIPN adapté à la Côte d'Ivoire)	National Multi-sectoral Platform for Nutrition (adapted name of NIPN in Côte d'Ivoire)
PNMN	Plan National Multisectoriel pour la Nutrition de la Côte d'Ivoire	National Multi-sectoral Plan for Nutrition of Côte d'Ivoire
SE-CONNAPE	Secrétariat exécutif du Conseil National pour la Nutrition l'alimentation et le Développement de la Petite enfance	Executive Secretary of the National Nutrition Council for Nutrition, Feeding and Development of Infants and Young Children
SUN	Mouvement Scaling-Up Nutrition https://scalingupnutrition.org/fr/	Scaling-Up Nutrition Movement https://scalingupnutrition.org
UNICEF	Fonds des Nations unies pour l'enfance	United Nations Children's Fund

Introduction:
Despite progress, more multi-sectoral efforts are needed

Malnutrition in Côte d'Ivoire continues to be a major public health issue, with an estimated 22% of children under the age of five suffering from stunting and 6.1% suffering from wasting[1]. Despite a solidly decreasing trend over the last decade (down from 34% in 2006[2]), the speed in reducing stunting is still insufficient to achieve the 2025 WHO nutrition targets[3].

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire adhered to the SUN movement in 2013 and designed its first 5-year National Multi-Sectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition (PNMN, see box page 9), in 2016.

The 2021 Lancet Serie on Nutrition[4] is calling for continuing multi-sectoral strategies and for designing more contextualised strategies to alleviate malnutrition and reach the 2025 targets. To do so, policy makers are in a critical need of contextualised, multi-sectoral and robust information.

A first key source of information is provided by the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the multi-sectoral plan for nutrition. A recent review of 26 plans for nutrition[5] highlighted that the M&E is too often a weak element of the plan. Too often it is under-funded with limited capacity to centralise and analyse the necessary information to adjust the operational strategy.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the M&E of the PNMN needed support and the Government decided to engage with the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) initiative in 2018 to strengthen the M&E and provide adequate information to policy makers.

The objectives of this case study[6] are to describe:

- how, concretely, the NIPN platform contributed to improve the M&E of the PNMN with a long-term approach;

- what remains to be done to better monitor the nutrition plan;

- the lessons learned along the way.

NIPN

The NIPN (National Information Platforms for Nutrition) initiative aims to support governments to establish multi-stakeholder platforms to tackle some of the deeply rooted classic challenges encountered by national governments: making better use of the data available and supporting the dialogue between data providers and data users.

The purpose of a NIPN is:

- to add value to the existing data produced by line ministries, by contributing to:
  - building the capacity of line ministries to produce quality and harmonised data;
  - facilitating and promoting a fair share of data;
  - centralising and collaboratively analysing data to produce robust multi-sectoral information;

- to respond to the needs of policy makers, the NIPN platforms contribute to facilitating a continuous dialogue between data producers and data users.

National policy makers lead the process, deciding on the information they need to design better national and sub-national nutrition policies. The NIPN initiative is operational in eight countries. More information here: http://www.nipn-nutrition-platforms.org

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1   UNICEF/WHO/World Bank, 2021

2   UNICEF/WHO/World Bank

3   World Health Organization, 2012

4   Heidkamp *et al.*, 2021millions of women, children, and adolescents worldwide remain undernourished (underweight, stunted, and deficient in micronutrients

5   Coile *et al.*, 2021

6   This case study has been conducted by C4N (Capacity for Nutrition). It is based on a previous review (C4N, 2020) of the work of the platform, a quick literature review and on extensive interviews with 12 stakeholders internal and external to the NIPN platform. This case study does not however pretend to have an exhaustive view of the situation.

Evolution of the monitoring framework of the first multi-sectoral nutrition plan

2013

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire joins the SUN movement.

2014

The National Nutrition Council is created with an Executive Secretary, the SE-CONNAPE at the Prime Minister's office.

2016

In 2016 the Government of Côte d'Ivoire designs the first national multi-sectoral plan for nutrition, the PNMN.

A monitoring framework is attached and validated by the sectors involved.

2017

Annual review of the plan but no indicators are informed by the sectors.

2018

The SE-CONNAPE increases its capacity to monitor the nutrition plan and creates a NIPN platform with the support of the EUD and UNICEF.

2019

The NIPN platform collaboratively reviews the monitoring framework, conducts a data mapping study, supports the nutrition focal points in the sectors and creates an online tool to centralise the data.

2020

For the first time in July 2020 the SE-CONNAPE publishes the monitoring indicators available on an online platform.

However, about half of the sectoral indicators are uninformed and the NIPN platform identified why.

2021

The 2nd multi-sectoral nutrition plan is being designed. As described by one sectoral nutrition focal point: 'For the next PNMN, we want to have a realistic monitoring framework, prioritising indicators available in the sectors and prioritising routine information systems.'

Percentage of sectoral monitoring indicators informed:

2016
0%

2020
56%

How NIPN contributed to improve the monitoring of the multi-sectoral plan for nutrition in Côte d'Ivoire

Key messages:

- Ensuring the capacity of the team in charge of the multi-sectoral monitoring is key, in terms of human resources, technical expertise, and material, but also by having the official mandate and authority to collect data from different providers.

- Building a tool to centralise and communicate monitoring indicators in real time can boost the implementation of the multi-sectoral plan of action for nutrition.

To design effective multi-sectoral policies to reduce malnutrition, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire created the National Nutrition Council (CNN) in July 2014, under the authority of the Vice President, a key driver of success[7]. The Nutrition Council is supported by an executive secretariat named SE-CONNAPE[8], directly under the supervision of the Prime Minister's office

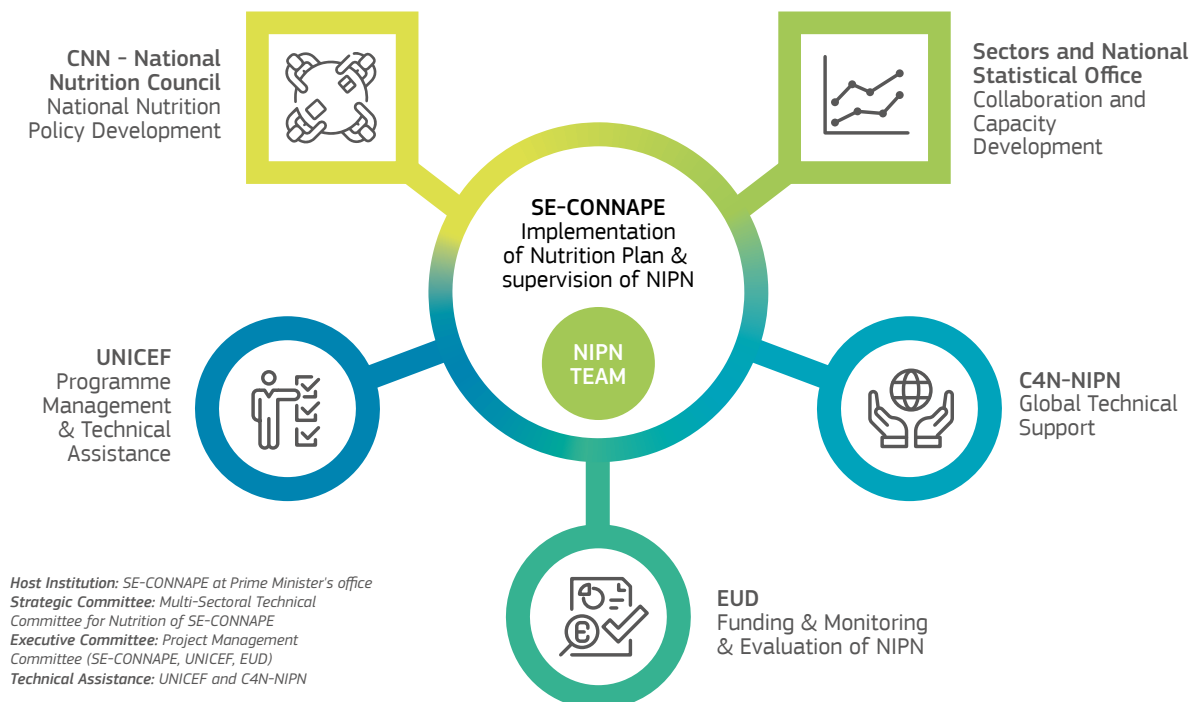(see figure below). The SE-CONNAPE has the mandate to coordinate with line ministries involved in the PNMN through nutrition focal points and to implement the monitoring and evaluation system of the Plan. This institutional set-up provides SE-CONNAPE with a strong mandate and convening power but is also sensitive to the political context[9].

NIPN in the Côte d'Ivoire nutrition governance system

CNN – National Nutrition Council
National Nutrition Policy Development

Sectors and National Statistical Office
Collaboration and Capacity Development

SE-CONNAPE
Implementation of Nutrition Plan & supervision of NIPN

NIPN TEAM

UNICEF
Programme Management & Technical Assistance

C4N-NIPN
Global Technical Support

EUD
Funding & Monitoring & Evaluation of NIPN

Host Institution: SE-CONNAPE at Prime Minister's office
Strategic Committee: Multi-Sectoral Technical Committee for Nutrition of SE-CONNAPE
Executive Committee: Project Management Committee (SE-CONNAPE, UNICEF, EUD)
Technical Assistance: UNICEF and C4N-NIPN

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7   Fracassi, Siekmans and Baker, 2020

8   Secrétariat exécutif du Conseil National pour la Nutrition l'Alimentation et le Développement de la Petite Enfance, or Executive Secretary of the National Nutrition Council for Nutrition, Feeding and Development of Infants and Young Children

9   (C4N) 2020)

From the onset, the NIPN initiative in Côte d'Ivoire was designed to primarily strengthen the M&E of the National Multi-sectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition (see box below), and it was therefore placed at SE-CONNAPE. The Government created and funded a NIPN project management unit (five full time staff) within SE-CONNAPE. Additionally, the European Union Delegation (EUD) in Côte d'Ivoire funded UNICEF to provide technical assistance and manage a substantial grant, to finance the activities of the platform in coordination with the key sectors involved with and benefiting from the initiative. C4N (Capacity for Nutrition) provides further technical assistance and learning from other NIPN projects.

Côte d'Ivoire's National Multi-sectoral Plan for Nutrition 2016-2020 (PNMN)

The first multi-sectoral plan for nutrition in Côte d'Ivoire proposes a set of interventions for nutrition by different sectors, based on the recommendations of the FAO/WHO Second International Conference on Nutrition in 2014. The Plan is the reference document for Government action on nutrition and is fully part of the National Development Plan.

The Plan aims to reduce stunting by 30% and to triple the rate of exclusive breastfeeding.

The Plan is divided in seven strategic axes:

- Axis 1 Promoting adapted nutrition practices and preventive measures (12% of total budget planned)
- Axis 2 Increasing the treatment of malnutrition (27% of total budget planned)
- Axis 3 Increasing durably the availability and access to nutritious and diverse food (21% of total budget planned)
- Axis 4 Increasing food safety (8.6% of total budget planned)
- Axis 5 Reinforcing the resilience of households facing food and nutritional crisis (11.7% of total budget planned)
- Axis 6 Improving hygiene, access to safe drinking water and sanitation (16.7% of total budget planned)
- Axis 7 Creating an enabling environment for nutrition and improving governance (2.8% of total budget planned)

The Plan calls for prioritising regions where the rates of malnutrition are highest with the objective to make interventions converge in the same priority zones.

As the first PNMN is coming to an end, a second 5-year plan is under discussion at the time of publication.

The PNMN included an M&E framework with a clear plan and design. However, between 2016 and 2019, no data was available to the SE-CONNAPE to produce quarterly and yearly updates as planned. With no monitoring information, it was difficult to adjust the interventions during the implementation of the PNMN.

This classic weakness[10] was observed by SE-CONNAPE and when the platform was operational in 2018, the first priority was to support the official monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework of the PNMN.

The SE-CONNAPE, through the NIPN platform, conducted a number of activities described in the following. The activities were carried out in a transparent and collaborative spirit with the nutrition sectoral focal points to support the M&E framework with a long-term approach.

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[10] Manorat *et al.,* 2020

Members of an agricultural cooperative that grows rice in the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire. ©IFAD/Franck Guiro

Mapping the data available in key sectors

The first activity implemented through the NIPN platform was a nutrition data mapping[11] to describe precisely the data available, ministry by ministry and relevant to nutrition. This study identified the indicators available and described their accessibility, timeliness, and completeness. The work was implemented in collaboration with nutrition focal points in the M&E department of each sector to support them in their tasks.

Mapping sectoral policies and their alignment with the PNMN

A second step consisted of mapping the sectoral policies relevant to nutrition. The PNMN is a multi-sectoral plan that involves several ministries which have their specific policies and timeframe. It takes time and several policy cycles to adjust completely the PNMN with sectoral policies. The work was again done in a collaborative spirit to support the sectors to contribute actively to the PNMN[12] [13].

Sensitising the nutrition sectoral focal points on nutrition

The official M&E framework of the PNMN assigns the sectoral nutrition focal points the role of communicating their indicators to SE-CONNAPE. The sectoral nutrition focal points are typically sitting within the M&E department of their respective ministry and have generally a limited understanding of nutrition key concepts. The NIPN platform, with the support of UNICEF, conducted workshops on nutrition key concepts so that each focal point could realise the contribution of their sectors to nutrition, the added value of multi-sectoral approaches, and the importance of having a multi-sectoral monitoring of the plan.

Developing an open-data platform of indicators of the M&E framework

The NIPN platform designed a web-based application to facilitate the centralisation, update, and communication of the indicators of the multi-sectoral plan for nutrition. The indicators can now be updated online by the data providers in a user-friendly application. The indicators are now visible and accessed by all on a public website[14].

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[11]   Michel and Apata, 2017

[12]   SE-CONNAPE and PNMIN, 2019a

[13]   SE-CONNAPE and PNMIN, 2020

[14]   PNMIN, 2020

Building capacity and supporting nutrition sectoral focal points in data harmonisation and centralisation

The NIPN platform also provided technical support to the nutrition focal points in the sector by describing precisely what the M&E plan required from them, and how to process the information in a timely manner. Previously, the nutrition focal points were unaware, and it was not a priority for them. The development of the web-based platform was a key element to facilitate their work and creating a positive dynamic. A multi-sectoral workshop was organised to identify and discuss potential solutions for better harmonisation of data across sectors. Indeed, the practices to manage the data can differ from one ministry to another. For example, the definition of 'community' is not standardised, and some sectors do not have the capacity to report their activity at this level.

Results and lessons learned

Thanks to all these activities, in July 2020, for the first time, the SE-CONNAPE was able to make 56% of sectoral indicators of the monitoring framework accessible to policy makers and the public. The website provides tangible information on the progress made, which will feed the on-going discussions for the design of the 2022-2025 PNMN.

We can see from the above that many activities are necessary to effectively implement the M&E: this is often underestimated. Even if some indicators are available within the sectors, centralising the indicators requires adherence from all sectors; that the sectors understand the added value of such work; that they have the tools to centralise the information, and to communicate and use the information.

Effective multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration takes time; it is a lengthy process to ensure its progress and to assure that meetings make productive use of time. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire, with the support of the EU, has sustainably increased the capacity of SE-CONNAPE to monitor the PNMN.

In doing so, the work undertaken to create a central and open platform was instrumental. It takes time and specific resources, but builds momentum, clarity, and transparency.

Despite this progress, there is still an important gap: about half of the official indicators to monitor the PNMN are still inaccessible. The NIPN platform undertook a deep review with the sectors involved to describe the gaps and the possible solutions.

Children attending class in Boundiali, northern Côte d'Ivoire. © UNICEF/UN0543463/Diarassouba

What could be done to better monitor the multi-sectoral nutrition plan?

Key messages:

- When designing the monitoring framework of the multi-sectoral nutrition plan, it is important to be collectively transparent on what information is required, what information is available, and what information needs to be created.

- Multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration needs time and finesse. It is not only about capacity but also about building trust and having a transparent and supportive attitude so that partners become stakeholders.

Where are the information gaps?

To understand not only the gaps in the monitoring framework but also the blockages behind the gaps, the NIPN platform conducted a thorough descriptive analysis with the sectors involved to provide pragmatic recommendations[15].

The platform analysis showed that 44% of the sectoral indicators that monitor the National Plan are not informed in the respective sectors. It is first important to note that it has an important impact for the adequate monitoring of the plan (see figure below). The PNMN is divided in seven strategic axes, and several strategic axes are poorly informed with less than 50% of the desired indicators effectively informed. Only one strategic axis is completely informed as planned in the design of the M&E. This axis is informed directly by SE-CONNAPE.

Percentage of monitoring indicators effectively informed by strategic axes of the Nutrition Plan

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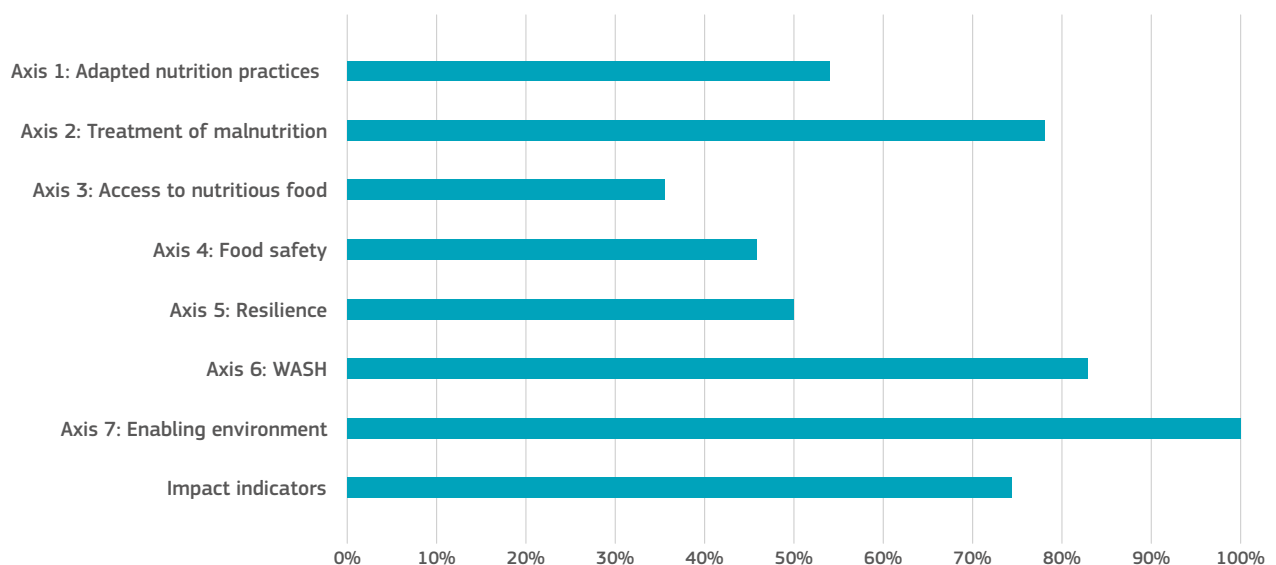
15   SE-CONNAPE and PNMIN, 2019b

As can be seen from the figure (page 12), several of the strategic priorities of the plan are difficult to monitor as only about 50% of the planned monitoring indicators are effectively informed.

Also, the NIPN platform identified that the data gaps are not uniform across sectors (see figure below). This partly reflects the situation of the sectoral monitoring systems, in that some ministries have stronger monitoring systems than others.

One reason for this is related to structural differences that are also encountered in other countries: the routine information system of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health are naturally structured around

physical facilities with each facility reporting on their activities (schools and health centres). However, for the Ministry of Agriculture, all farmers are not organised around a single facility and do not have to report on their activities.

A second reason for these inconsistencies is that some ministries are better equipped than others for M&E. While the Ministries of Health, Education, and Water in Côte d'Ivoire have invested in their information systems, others are still lacking basic resources. Indeed, one of the interviewees mentioned that some ministries do not have a digital platform, a data collection manual and only have a very small data analysis team.

*Percentage of monitoring indicators effectively informed by sector*
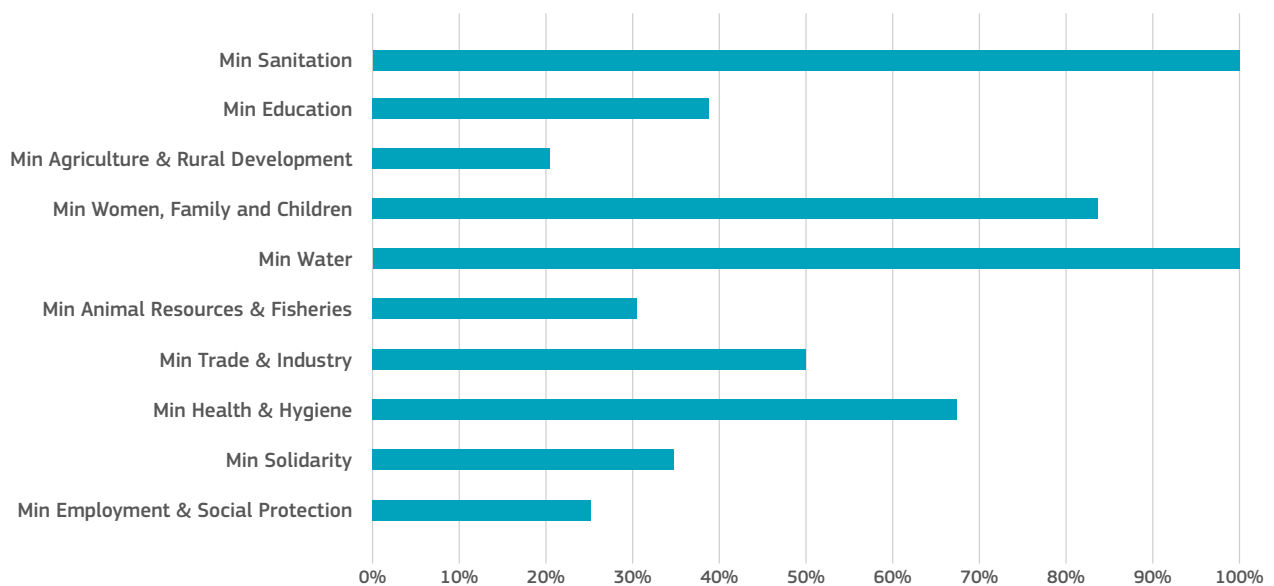
As shown on the figure above, 6 of the 10 sectors involved have less than 50% of the planned monitoring indicators effectively informed.

The NIPN platform also looked at the type of indicators and their sources. The figure below shows that output indicators are poorly informed. It also shows that most

of the indicators that are not informed are outcome and output level indicators. They should theoretically be informed either through national annual surveys or from activity reports or programme evaluations, but these surveys are expensive and difficult to fund and therefore have not been implemented regularly.

Percentage of monitoring indicators effectively informed by type of indicator
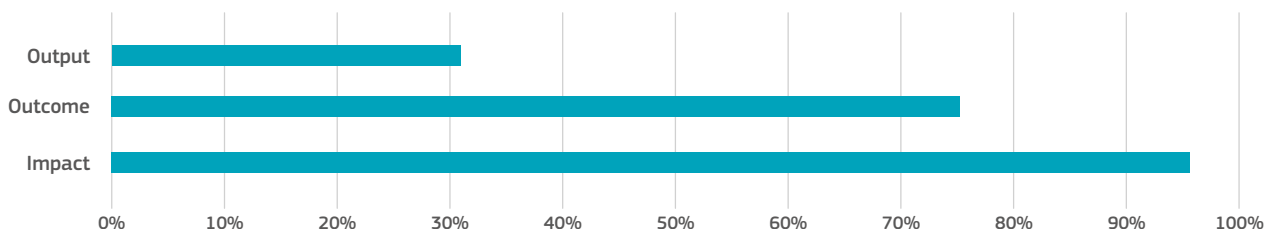
Based on this analysis, the NIPN platform identified several routes to improve the monitoring of the nutrition plan. Some can be immediately implemented; others will need to be discussed during the design of

the next monitoring framework of the 2022-2025 nutrition plan.

Finding smart alternatives and overcoming technical issues

Some of the gaps observed are related to technical issues concerning the definition of the indicator, the source of the information or the quality of the data available.

When the exact indicator is not informed, a quick and pragmatic solution is to look for proxy indicators, if they exist. While the exact indicator, as defined in the official M&E framework, may not be directly available, a similar (or 'proxy') indicator may be available in the sectoral information systems.

Other technical issues are more difficult to deal with. The definition of some indicators in the monitoring framework poses serious challenges to some sectoral information systems. One problem identified is the inclusion of 'community' as the denominator of certain monitoring indicators. In a public health approach, it is important to monitor how the different nutrition intervention are combined at the community level. In this case, the notion of 'community' is not precisely defined and harmonised across sectors. Also, some sectors are unable to report their activity at this level. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture typically reports on the number of farmers benefiting from a given intervention, without knowing the total number of farmers in a community.

The source of information of the indicators also poses problems. The official M&E framework relies heavily on national annual surveys which are difficult to fund on a regular basis in each sector. Alternatives can be found in the routine information system.

The quality of the data is another critical issue. Even when funding is available some data collected in national surveys were not published as they did not reach the quality standards required.

Aligning sectoral policies with the multi-sectoral nutrition policy

Despite the fact that all the sectors were involved in the process of designing the M&E framework of the 2016-2020 Nutrition Plan, the sectoral policies were not all aligned with the multi-sectoral plan. Some indicators may be a priority for nutrition, but not for a specific sector. As Dr. Patricia N'Goran, SUN Focal Point and former Executive Secretary of SE-CONNAPE, describes: 'Capacity strengthening within each sectoral M&E system was necessary as the requested nutrition sensitive indicators were new to them and thus had never been collected before.'

Mainstreaming nutrition into sectoral policies is a lengthy process, as it depends on the policy cycle within each sector. The NIPN Platform reviewed how nutrition is incorporated into strategic sectoral documents (SE-CONNAPE and PNMIN, 2020) to identify gaps in the information and also to identify key windows of opportunity. This study identified specific sectors where nutrition was barely mentioned in their national policy, as some such policies were designed before the multi-sectoral nutrition plan was finalised.

N'Golo Fagnoro Coulibaly, the focal point for nutrition at the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, believes that the integration of nutrition within his sector has improved over the past five years. He describes trainings held at the Ministry, for example regarding the national milk policy, adding that SE-CONNAPE represented by the NIPN platform were involved. This illustrates how the work of the NIPN platform progressively supports the inclusion of nutrition into sectoral policies, including the monitoring of those policies. Being visible and known within each collaborative sector facilitates the inclusion of SE-CONNAPE in sectoral processes that are relevant for the multi-sectoral plan and its monitoring.

Stimulate the dialogue between data users and data providers

Stimulate the demand for information

Stimulating the demand for specific information from high level officials is an effective way to prioritise some indicators for data collection. Given the limited resources available to collect data, there is a tendency to prioritise indicators which get most of the attention from policy makers.

To stimulate this demand, some basic information is also needed to feed the dialogue. As illustrated by the focal point of the FAO FIRST programme[16], Mr Mahama Zoungrana: 'I've participated in two annual technical committees to review the progress of the national multi-sectoral plan for nutrition. The discussions and recommendations remained a bit general. The discussions would have been very different if tangible information was available. We need to start from concrete issues.'

To contribute to a dynamic dialogue, the NIPN platform made the official monitoring indicators of the PNMN accessible to the public online for the first time in July 2020. The website provides tangible information on the progress, which will feed the on-going discussions for the design of the 2022-2025 PNMN. The website also indicates the gaps. Having clear and updated information on what is available and what is missing can stimulate discussion during multi-sectoral high-level meetings.

The NIPN platform also conducted multi-sectoral workshops with policy makers to identify and prioritise the key information they need. A data analysis plan has been elaborated and will be implemented in collaboration with the National Statistical Office for producing this information requested by policy makers.

Generate trust and transparency among stakeholders

The dialogue between data providers and data users has to be constructive and collaborative in order to benefit all stakeholders. The monitoring framework is strengthened when the sectors are interested by the results that are produced.

Also, this dynamic collaboration requires transparency among the stakeholders involved. In Côte d'Ivoire, three negative narratives have potentially hampered a transparent and constructive multi-sectoral coordination for the first PNMN.

- A first narrative is the expectation from the sectors that massive new investments will be attached to the plan. New investments have been done but not to the expected level.

- A second narrative is the perception that the Multi-sectoral Plan was mainly driven by the health sector.

- A third narrative is the ambiguity of the official mandate of the SE-CONNAPE, which has been perceived as having a supervising role over the sectors for all the interventions contributing to reduce malnutrition.

To overcome these narratives, a transparent and collaborative attitude is needed. The NIPN platform engaged in a number of activities to improve the M&E framework, but the attitude, the way the platform worked with sectors, is a key element of a successful collaboration.

As mentioned by Mr Mahama Zoungrana the focal point of the FAO FIRST programme: 'Using the data gap to collaborate with sectors to fill those gaps is different than blaming the sectors for not providing the information: coordination is not supervision. I've observed the collaborative attitude of the NIPN platform when working with sectors and it is very positive for the multi-sectoral collaboration. You need this level of finesse so that the message can pass on.'

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[16] FAO FIRST: Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme is a partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Being pragmatic when designing the monitoring framework

An ambitious monitoring framework

Given the complexity of multi-sectoral programming, it is understandable that the desired 'ideal' M&E framework of the Nutrition Plan could not be totally and immediately informed by the existing sectoral information systems. However, lacking almost half of the official sectoral indicators in the sectoral information system highlights the initial ambition of the M&E framework.

Dr Patricia N'Goran, SUN Focal Point, confirms that the M&E plan was ambitious: 'Some indicators did not exist in the sectoral information systems, but it was important to have this objective to increase the capacity of the sectors to be able to monitor properly the PNMN.' This ambition found an echo in the sectors who work to receive funding for their information systems.

An additional factor contributed to the validation of an ambitious monitoring framework. While one nutrition focal point per ministry was appointed during the participatory process, there are different divisions producing data within one ministry. There was (and is still) a lack of coordination within some ministries regarding what exactly is available and what is missing.

With nutrition leaders aiming for an ambitious multi-sectoral plan with a strong and detailed monitoring framework, and the sectors working hard to fund their information system, the monitoring framework was not able to work as efficiently as initially planned.

An ambitious monitoring framework is not a problem in itself. The real issue is what information is really necessary to monitor the plan, what information is already available and what information needs to be created. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, the gap between the desired information and the information available was not clear during the design of the M&E framework.

An ambitious multi-sectoral nutrition plan

The ambition of the M&E framework is also a reflection of the initial ambition of the PNMN itself. All the interventions described in the plan could not be funded. As described by the PNMIN platform[17], four indicators in the monitoring framework are not informed as the planned interventions were not funded, and hence the activities not implemented[18].

This reveals the implications of a strategic choice when designing the PNMN: should the goals of the plan be rather ambitious to create momentum and access funding, or rather be conservative to be realistic?

This difficult balance is discussed by a sectoral focal point, who describes the need for plans to be aligned with the capacity of the ministry, citing that some plans vastly exceed the budget of the total ministry, making them unrealistic and likely to fall short of initial goals. The monitoring of the interventions is then more likely to be perceived as a perilous exercise that would expose the collective difficulties to reach an ambitious target, rather than as a collaborative learning exercise.

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[17]   SE-CONNAPE and PNMIN, 2019b

[18]   Case of four indicators in the common results framework for the PNMN: Percentage of nutrition-friendly schools in priority intervention areas; Number of new modern urban waste treatment and recovery infrastructures built; % of staff of Service de Santé Scolaire et Universitaire (SSSU) and Centre régional de la mutualité et des œuvres sociales (CREMOS) trained in malnutrition screening; % of SSSU/CREMOS services equipped with screening equipment.

Children washing their hands in a school in Man, in the west of Côte d'Ivoire © UNICEF/UN0613343/Dejongh

Advocate for funding of the sectoral information systems

A first major reason for the data gaps observed is the lack of funding. Information systems are structurally underfunded internationally. The Bern Network[19] estimates that the financial support to statistical systems is falling 50% short of what is needed, and it has remained stagnant over the past five years. There is a lack of interest of investment in statistical systems, and Côte d'Ivoire is not an exception. For example, as one sectoral focal point noted, 'of all the indicators that are supposed to be collected in that specific ministry, probably only 20% are effectively collected.' While all the recommendations listed above should come first, funding data collection remains an important element to ensure proper monitoring of the PNMN.

Each sector works hard to advocate for funding their information systems and finding low-cost solutions. As mentioned above, having key nutrition indicators validated in sectoral strategies and policies has been an effective way to advocate for additional funding. For example, the levels of food insecurity by region are now collected for 19 regions in Côte d'Ivoire and there will be funding for collecting this information throughout all regions in the country in 2022, thanks to the support of the EU Delegation. Having this indicator as a key indicator of the national strategy was key to advocate for financial support.

Other complementary initiatives like the Nutrition Information System[20] project can also support sectoral information systems. The NIPN platform is actively connecting with these initiatives and advocating for sectoral data initiatives.

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[19]   *The Bern Network*, 2021

[20]   Improving National Information Systems for Nutrition (EC-NIS) is an EU funded project to support the nutrition information in the health monitoring systems in five countries. The project is implemented by UNICEF and WHO.

Children attending class in Boundiali, northern Côte d'Ivoire.
© UNICEF/UN0543463/Diarassouba

Results and lessons learned

Thanks to the support of the NIPN platform since 2018, about half of the official sectoral monitoring indicators of the nutrition plan were effectively informed and available online in 2020. To fill the remaining information gap, more time and collaboration is required.

Technical issues in implementing the nutrition plan can be overcome quite quickly. For example, the NIPN platforms facilitated a workshop with the sectors, and proxy indicators could be found for 11 uninformed indicators.

More time is needed for sectoral policies to progressively integrate nutrition (and nutrition indicators) as they get renewed. For this, SE-CONNAPE is now effectively coordinating with the relevant sectors and their nutrition focal points.

In the long run, better funding of the sectoral information systems is also important. The design of the 2022-2025 multi-sectoral plan for nutrition is a key opportunity to design an efficient monitoring framework. All stakeholders involved in the design of the 2016-2020 monitoring framework had good reason to be ambitious. However, the work of the NIPN platform shows that the initial ambition of the monitoring framework was likely unrealistic considering the capacity of sectoral information systems. To maintain reasonable expectations for nutrition plans, two types of information provided by the NIPN platform are key: the percentage of indicators that are effectively monitored, and the recommendations to improve the information system. Equally important is strong communication and collaboration among stakeholders, which facilitates an open data sharing culture.

*Farmer showing the quality of his paddy
in Ferkéssédougou. ©IFAD/Samir Bejaoui*

Woman and children gathering water, in Bolé, in the north of Côte d'Ivoire. © UNICEF/UN0613319/Dejongh

Perspectives on M&E

Developing a realistic monitoring framework for a multi-sectoral plan for nutrition is a complex endeavour. In Côte d'Ivoire, the NIPN platform has supported SE-CONNAPE in its coordination role by 1) reinforcing a collaborative attitude with the key sectors involved; 2) building their capacity; and 3) identifying the gaps in the sectoral information system by centralising and publishing the indicators online. This information is going to be one of the main sources of information available for the policy makers to design the 2022-2025 nutrition plan.

However, policy makers are still in need of more complete and timely information. The 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit[21] highlighted the need for increased investments in monitoring and information systems for nutrition[22] and recommended to allocate a minimum of 5% of national nutrition budget for this purpose. In Côte d'Ivoire, less than 1% of the total budget of the PNMN is dedicated for the M&E of the plan[23].

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[21]   The Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit was hosted by the Government of Japan in December 2021. The event convened a cross-section of stakeholders to announce final financial and policy commitments and chart the path toward 2030 with concrete recommendations to the global community. https://nutritionforgrowth.org/

[22]   For more information on N4G side event on data: Improving Nutrition Through Accountability and Data Systems – A Certified Side Event of 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit – Data for Nutrition

[23]   According to initial PNMN workplan 2015, action 7.5.

Annex 1: Methodology

This case study has been conducted by C4N (Capacity for Nutrition).

The objectives and the methodology have been described, reviewed and validated by the key partners (C4N, NIPN team Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire, and the EUD in Côte d'Ivoire). The same partners have reviewed and validated the case study at two stages in the process.

The case study is based on a previous review (C4N, 2020) of the work of the NIPN platform in Côte d'Ivoire that was finalised in September 2020. The review touched upon the support of the platform to the monitoring and evaluation of the Nutrition Plan in Côte d'Ivoire. The previous review included extensive interviews of key informants internal and external to the platform. Some interviews have been reviewed to extract information relevant to the topic of the case study.

The case study is also based on a quick literature review looking at key reports produced by the NIPN platform in Côte d'Ivoire and scientific articles.

The case study included complementary interviews of national and international key informants to complete the 2020 review. The list of the persons interviewed specifically for the case study is available in Annex 2. Due to limited time and availability, the case study failed to interview a couple of persons that were intended to be interviewed and in particular the new Executive Secretary of the SE-CONNAPE (the previous Executive Secretary could be interviewed though) and the Nutrition Focal Point at Ministry of Health (who was interviewed in 2020).

The interviews were performed by distance due to COVID-19 restrictions.

A woman walking in the fields near Nahoualakaha in the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire.

Annex 2:
List of persons interviewed

Name	Function	Organisation
Dr Patricia N'Goran	SUN focal point, former Executive Secretary of SE-CONNAPE	Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM) at Presidency of Côte d'Ivoire
Dr Faustin N'Dri	Head of NIPN unit	SE-CONNAPE
Dr Assemian Ake	NIPN unit	SE-CONNAPE
N'Dri Ahoutou Louis	NIPN unit	SE-CONNAPE
Gbouazo Tato Oumar	NIPN unit	SE-CONNAPE
Roland Mady	NIPN unit	SE-CONNAPE
Dr Denis Garnier	Nutrition Specialist	UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire
Paulin Koffi	Technical Assistant for NIPN	UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire
Germain Bomisso	Technical Assistant for NIPN	UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire
Serge Couhoulé Allou	Nutrition Focal Point	Ministry of Agriculture (MINADER)
N'golo Fagnoro Coulibaly	Nutrition Focal Point	Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries (MIRAH)
Mahama Zoungrana	FAO FIRST Focal Point at SE-CONNAPE	FAO Côte d'Ivoire
Debora Di Dio	Senior Nutrition and Strategy Adviser	Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Secretariat
Dr Ingo Neu	Consultant for C4N-NIPN	EPOS Health Management
Kendra Siekmans	Consultant for Nutrition International	Nurture Development

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A girl attending class in Sakassou, in the centre of Côte d'Ivoire. © UNICEF/UN0616786/Dejongh