**Tracking Government Investments for Nutrition at Country Level**

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1. **Introduction**

Having reliable data is essential to policy makers to prioritise, to plan, and to make decisions on resource allocation, as well as to monitor and evaluate policy implementation. Resource tracking is an important way of promoting transparency and can be used for advocacy purposes.

A flexible framework can be helpful to provide a starting point and be used as guidance by Governments planning to establish a financial tracking system for nutrition. The framework should be adaptable to countries based on data and capacity available in each system.

The purpose of this note is to discuss an approach on how financial resources on nutrition can be tracked using on-line published national budgets as the data source. The main aim is to get an **historical trend of budget allocations for nutrition within a country**.

1. **Data source**

The **national budget** is the Government’s main economic policy document, indicating how the Government plans to use public resources to meet policy goals.

In June 2014, a team of two consultants conducted a three-week desk-review to search for publicly available national budgets in the Ministry of Finance website or the Treasury of the relevant government. They reviewed 28 national budgets out of 51 countries (55%).

They found a **nutrition** **department** **or equivalent** only in six countries. A **programme level description** was available only for 21 national budgets but only ten had a programme that included ‘nutrition’ in the title.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. **Data users**

Until March 2015, a team of data experts from the Global Nutrition Report and the Institute of Development will help countries with populating the Excel Table (Step 1). To be able to provide remote support, they will need to receive the electronic national budgets (or equivalent official documents) and the key-words to do the search (Annex 1).

For the replicability of the exercise, countries should identify **one or two** **national** **person** **to support with the data gathering**. People engaged in this exercise should be familiar with the national budget and public finance system of the country. Ideal people could be from the Ministry of Finance or from a Planning Unit within the Government.

Completing Step 1 will depend on the budget structure and level of details. Once the Excel Table is populated, the document will need to be reviewed by sector representatives, who are familiar with the programmes that have been included (or excluded) from the data-gathering exercise.

1. **Three-step approach to track Government resources for nutrition**

The review of the 28 published national budgets shows that in the best case scenario, the public information available on domestic resources for nutrition is limited to: 1) a **programme name**, 2) a brief generic **programme description**, 3) an **‘oversight’ agency** (or the agency with the authority to incur expenditures for the programme) and; 4) a **total amount** allocated to the programme. Only in very few cases, it might be possible to have a breakdown of the programme by activities and by funding source.

Based on this review, a three-step methodology is proposed as the most acceptable and feasible way for countries to track historical trends on budget allocations. To ensure transparency and replicability, all steps taken need to be documented in detail and specific data sources need to be provided. The presentation of results need to be clear on what the estimated figure covers and what it does not cover.

* **Step One** (*See Annex A for details*)**:** Identify the relevant programmes or departments through a key word[[2]](#footnote-2) search
* **Step Two**: Assess whether the programmes/departments found fall under the category of “nutrition-specific” or “nutrition-sensitive” investments. “Nutrition-specific” budget allocations would be those that are within a nutrition department or a nutrition programme or a so-called nutrition budget line. To be “nutrition-sensitive”, a programme would need to address underlying causes of malnutrition and especially be beneficial to the most vulnerable population including children and women. The existence of a Common Results Framework can effectively help sectors to decide which programmes to include or not.
* **Step Three:** Attribute a percentage of the allocated budget to nutrition (weighting). 100% of the amount would be allocated in the case of programmes that have been categorized as “nutrition-specific” while a reasonable amount decided by the stakeholders (e.g. 25%) would be allocated in the case of programmes that have been categorized as “nutrition-sensitive”.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Step One would be part of the preparatory work exercise while Step Two and Step Three would require close consultation with sector representatives that are familiar with the programmes. Ideally, step three would need to be validated through a technical meeting with participants from the SUN Multi-Stakeholder Platform.

**THIS NOTE FOCUSES ONLY ON STEP ONE (ANNEX A AND FAQ)**

**Annex A**

**Step One: Key words (tentative list)**

The **first milestone** is to share the national budget or the official financial documents that are going to be used for the exercise.

The **second milestone** is to provide a list of **key sectoral domains** that will be included in the exercise:

* The Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Education are clearly identifiable in all national budgets.
* The functional areas of social protection, WASH and gender may be in the in the title of different ministries depending on the country.

Please, clearly list all the Ministries you want to include using the same title as indicated in the national budgets or the financial documents.

The **basic key-word search** will be done using the word **‘nutrition’** to identify ‘nutrition’ programmes, departments or budget lines.

The **advanced key-word search** will be done by applying identified key-words to increase the likelihood of finding budget allocations that are relevant to nutrition.

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| **Sectoral domain** | **Key words (examples)** |
| **Health**: | maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health, non-communicable diseases, hygiene, micro nutrients, feeding practices, malnutrition, family planning or reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and TB, sanitation, baby-friendly |
| **Agriculture**: | women, staples (grains, roots, cereals), legumes, pulses, nuts, fruits and vegetables, animal sources, fishery sources, extension services, cooperatives, smallholders, food aid, relief, family farming, food, food security, hunger, rural development, bio fortification, food-safety, aflatoxin.  Note: differentiate what is done to enhance domestic vs. export markets |
| **Education**: | female education, rural education, female secondary education, school feeding, early child education, WASH, hygiene, hand-washing, adult literacy |
| **Social welfare / protection** | women, safety net programs, cash and voucher transfers, orphan and vulnerable children, pension, insurance |
| **Infrastructure**: | drinking water supplies, environmental sanitation, sewages, rural areas, remote areas, underserved areas, electricity, ICT, markets |
| **Governance**: | women, children, local governance, decentralization, civil society, transparency, equity, accountability, human rights, public safety, evidence-based, pro-poor, accountability, *right-to-food, monitoring of breast-milk substitutes, fortification* |
| **Employment** | women, maternity leave, maternity protection, child-friendly, women-friendly, district / community extension workers, rural areas, remote areas, underserved areas, pension, insurance |
| **Private sector**: | women, pro-poor, good corporate governance, domestic oriented, small-medium enterprises, food fortification, monitoring of BMS, maternity protection, food safety |

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

* How do we decide which **key words** to use?

*Annex A provides a preliminary list of ‘key words’ based on international experience and literature (e.g. Geir et al., SUN Donor Financial Tracking methodology, 2013 Lancet Series, 2010 SUN Framework of Actions, WHA Global Monitoring Framework). This* ***list should be adapted*** *by country based on their national nutrition plan or, where available, common results framework.*

* The **structure of the budget** does not contain the necessary detail. For example, in some cases it shows only allocations by department and not by programme and there are no details on description of allocations.

*The tool is flexible and column B can be completed with names of departments instead of names of programmes. Similarly, if the budget does not provide details on the description of the programme or department, the column can be left blank. The important thing is to* ***identify the execution agency and by extension the person in charge*** *so that you can contact them and get the necessary details. For example, if you know that the department of basic health services must contain some nutrition relevant budget allocations, you can approach them to provide you details on what they are doing so you can make a decision on the inclusion and the weighting of those expenditures.*

1. Reference Picanyol and Misgar, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The list of key words in Annex A is meant to be an ‘example’. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is consistent with the attribution agreed by the Donor Network for programmes categorized under ‘nutrition-sensitive’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)