INTRODUCTION

Peru’s national nutrition information systems are reflective of the country’s current focus on improving nutrition throughout the lifecycle through coordinated multi-sectoral efforts at all levels of government.

The current National Strategy for Social Development and Inclusion, “Inclusion for Growth”, focuses on closing gaps for the most vulnerable families, including the goal to reduce chronic child malnutrition and anemia. The Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), established in 2011 to facilitate the coordination of decentralized social programs of the regional and local governments, has been instrumental in bringing the different sectors together to adopt a common conceptual framework, identify evidence-based strategies and interventions, set common goals and share information across sectors to monitor progress in an integrated manner.

Three main elements can be highlighted from this case: i) the results based management approach that has been instrumental to define key targets and indicators, which facilitates sectorial collection of data; ii) the availability of information in the public sphere, provided by the government; iii) the existence of consensus-building groups that bring government and civil society actors together to discuss progress based on information updates facilitates the dialogue and use of the evidence for achieving both political and programmatic objectives.

Figure A: Map of Peru showing anemia prevalence in children 6-36 months of age based on the annual national health survey (Source: ENDES 2016)
USE OF DATA AND INFORMATION

Information has played an important role in Peru’s story of reducing chronic malnutrition, used by a range of stakeholders. This section outlines the uses of data and information by various stakeholders in the country.

For tracking program implementation

MIDIS uses information generated by routine monitoring systems and annual surveys to assess nutrition program performance and progress toward national nutrition targets. National, regional and district level data on the nutritional status of children and women are prominent components of reports produced by MIDIS that track advancements in nutrition at the departmental level and for large geographic groupings, such as urban and rural areas, the Andean highlands, and the Peruvian Amazon region.

For advocacy and accountability

Persistent high levels of child stunting between 1995 and 2005 provided a strong basis for the Child Nutrition Initiative (IDI), an advocacy coalition of civil society, UN agencies and donors working on health and nutrition, to engage in high-level advocacy with presidential candidates during the 2006 election for a commitment on their part to reduce chronic malnutrition by 5 percent in children under 5 years within 5 years. Today, IDI’s members continue to use nutrition data to do advocacy at all levels and to conduct annual assessments of the government’s actions to meet its commitment to reduce child malnutrition.

For results-based management

A comprehensive results-based budgeting process directly links public resources with nutrition program activities for which the government is responsible. The Integrated Financial Management Information System (Consulta Amigable), managed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, provides monthly reports on financial execution for all budget programs, including those relevant for nutrition. Different incentives are used to facilitate the collection of data necessary to effectively monitor impact and reward the achievement of agreed results. The most notable example is the Fund for Social Performance and Results Achievement, Fondo de Estímulo al Desempeño (FED), designed to improve both the efficiency and coverage of government services at the local level, with increases in funding of up to 50 percent for regions that successfully align their health and nutrition policies with those of the national government. Dashboard reports prepared by MIDIS provide regions with a real-time tool for seeing how they are progressing.

For consensus building

The National Roundtable for the Fight Against Poverty (MCLCP, known as Mesa), a consensus-building body for government and civil society actors, uses nutrition information to stimulate discussions on public policy as well as actions taken to implement interventions effectively at regional level. Mesa uses information on the current conditions of the population to identify gaps, where they are greatest, what groups suffer most and what policies and actors can be used to take steps to address these gaps.
THE PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES

Peru’s national information system has been reshaped over the past six years to provide more useful, timely and reliable data on key indicators of program implementation and results achieved. Program logic models have been useful in bringing the various sectors together to clearly define the results chain from supply to service delivery to coverage and impact, reducing the number of indicators monitored regularly, and disaggregating results down to the local level, which are updated daily (see Figure D). The ability for administrators to access this real-time information on program performance at each step of the process has resulted in more proactive problem-solving and responsive decision-making.

MIDIS has worked with the various sectors to establish agreements on how each performance indicator is defined, how often it is collected and how the information is shared across sectors. For example, the Ministry of Health tracks health facility service coverage through its Health Management Information System (HMIS), including key nutrition indicators such as iron supplementation coverage and growth monitoring. While most facilities report data on a monthly basis, a sub-group of health posts considered as sentinel sites report information on a daily basis to the national level. The General Office of Statistics and Informatics analyses the data quality and gives feedback to health posts through the regional offices, helping to decrease errors and inconsistencies in the data.

MIDIS administers an online platform called REDInforma that provides a secure space for each sector to share their database. Figure E provides an overview of how this central repository collects data from various government sources and produces integrated reports for different users. Linking information across administrative information systems is possible due to the establishment of a national birth registry that provides a validated and reliable identification number for every child. Birth registry data has also improved program forecasts and budgeting, since they are no longer relying on out-of-date census projections to estimate population targets.

Population-level data on nutrition outcomes are measured annually since 2004 as part of the national population and family health survey (ENDES', continuous DHS), led by the National Statistics and Information Institute (INEIv) and fully institutionalized within the government’s operations.vii

MIDIS uses the information from sectoral monitoring systems (e.g. HMIS) and ENDES to design dashboard reports at regional, departmental and district levels, available online through REDinforma as a free, publicly accessible platform where anyone can download the latest reports. MIDISTrito was launched in 2016 to provide districts with quarterly progress reports, including general characteristics of the district, health and education indicators, and housing conditions.

Despite remarkable progress in improving information systems, building capacity to sustain and effectively use them is now recognized as an important gap to be filled. Although reports make information easily accessible in a timely manner at regional and local levels, there is weak operational capacity to use the information to strengthen actions and reach targets.
Regional Liaison Teams provide support and technical advice to lower levels of government who are responsible to design and implement their own programmes, and the MOH provides training and support to health staff and statisticians at both the national and regional levels. Regional consultants use the dashboard reports produced by MIDIS to discuss results with regional and local level stakeholders and encourage problem-solving. However, specific investment in both human resources and infrastructure is needed. Although the system is well-organized at the national level, local level health posts are often under-resourced and utilizing out-of-date equipment and systems.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES**

The Peru example underlines the importance of collecting national and subnational data, allowing for timely monitoring of key nutrition indicators. High-quality data can flag potential problems with program design and implementation.

- Availability of annual data on select results, coverage, and financing is critical for enabling a collaborative approach to monitoring and to adjusting programs as required.
- Results based management has strengthened monitoring and evaluation system adherence, as stakeholders recognize the relevance and value of this information for decision-making.
- Regional and local level stakeholders need training and support to effectively utilize the results for designing and adjusting local programming.
- Making information available in the public sphere is useful for ensuring ongoing dialogue between government and civil society actors.

- Continuous surveys based on representative sampling methods are useful for verifying the quality of administrative registry data. The more confidence that stakeholders have in the quality of this data, the more likely they are to use it.
- Consensus-building groups, such as Mesa, that bring government and civil society actors together to discuss progress based on information updates are helpful for encouraging continued dialogue and using the evidence for achieving both political and programmatic objectives.
- Establishing a national birth registry information system with a unique identification number for each child has been instrumental in improving the coordination and quality of data in related information systems.
- Increasing the likelihood of lower levels of government accessing the information through different incentives and capacity building initiatives is important. Tracking a small number of key performance indicators and presenting them in a user-friendly way - such as traffic lights or happy/sad faces - can be helpful.

**References and Notes**

1. Strengthening the capacity of SUN countries to scale up nutrition through learning routes: a pioneer project in Peru
3. Iniciativa contra la desnutricion infantile
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