



TAN TECHNICAL BRIEF

Providing Technical Assistance for SUN countries

Documenting the added value of Nutrition International and MQSUN+ Technical Assistance for Nutrition in eight SUN countries



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Abbreviations

AFSeN-A	Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda	NII	Nutrition Improvement Initiative (Pakistan)
CDP	Comprehensive Development Plan (Philippines)	NNC	National Nutrition Council (Philippines)
CLM	Cellule de Lutte Contre la Malnutrition (Senegal)	PAMRDC	National Multi-sector Plan of Action for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition (Mozambique)
CRF	Common Results Framework	PSMSAN	Multi-sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategic Plan (Burundi)
ENN	Emergency Nutrition Network	PPAN	Philippines Plan of Action for Nutrition
ESAN	Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (Mozambique)	PSMN	Multi-sector Nutrition Strategic Plan (Senegal)
ETN	Nutrition Technical Team (Burundi)	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
FSN	Food security and nutrition	SESAN	Food and Nutrition Security Secretariat (Guatemala)
FSNP	Food Security and Nutrition Plan	SETSAN	Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (Mozambique)
GAC	Global Affairs Canada	SMS	SUN Movement Secretariat
KM	Knowledge management	SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
LGU	Local government unit	TA	Technical assistance
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation	TAN	Technical Assistance for Nutrition
MQSUN+	Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus	UN	United Nations
MSNAP	Multi-sector Nutrition Action Plan	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MSNP	Multi-sector Nutrition Plan	WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
MSP	Multi-stakeholder platform	WHO	World Health Organization
NCD	Non-communicable disease		
NI	Nutrition International		

Contents

1. Background and Introduction	3
2. Overview of the Technical Assistance provided in eight SUN countries	6
3. Added value of Technical Assistance	7
Building country capacity in nutrition	7
Identifying advocacy priorities	9
Moving country nutrition agendas forward	9
Fostering an inclusive multi-sector approach	11
Integration of equity and gender equality considerations into SUN processes	12
4. How can TA be most efficiently managed and leveraged? Best practices, lessons learnt and recommendations	13
Ensuring sustainability of TA outputs	13
Remote support to fragile states	14
Promotion of national multi-sector government leadership in developing outputs	14
Ensuring utility of TA outputs to differing subnational contexts	14
Flexibility in the design and implementation of the TA	14
Allowing time for building knowledge and evidence and defining priorities	14
Institutionalisation and coordination of TA at country level	15

1. Background and Introduction

The Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) programme, funded with aid from the UK government, is a mechanism to provide technical assistance to Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) country governments and build capacities towards advancing multi-sector nutrition agendas, in line with the SUN Movement principles and roadmap. TAN also strives to generate, learn from, adopt and disseminate knowledge of what works within and across countries in the SUN Movement. TAN partners are the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS), Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+), Nutrition International (NI), and Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN). MQSUN+ and NI provide technical assistance (TA) to SUN countries, while ENN provides knowledge management (KM) support to countries, the TAN programme and the SMS more broadly. MQSUN+ and NI also support the SMS as needed. The TAN programme began in 2015 and, over a four-year period, NI and MQSUN+ have developed and implemented over 85 TA projects to support SUN countries.

SUN Movement countries can access TA delivered by MQSUN+ and NI. MQSUN+ is a last-resort TA provider and receives requests from the SUN Focal Points through the SMS. NI provides an in-country solution, receiving requests from the SUN Focal Point and multi-stakeholder platform. This facilitates a 'demand-driven' model whereby technical support and expertise reach countries in a timely, context-specific and relevant manner. NI and MQSUN+ support national SUN Focal Points and global SUN stakeholders to overcome capacity gaps in the design and delivery of multi-sector national nutrition plans, tapping into their global hub to source and deploy expertise when required.

This technical brief, the third in a series of three, has been developed to document different aspects, best practices and lessons learnt from TA provision. The other briefs in the series consider TA ways of working within the TAN project and a landscape analysis of TA provision within the project.

Overall objective

The aim of this brief is to capture the impact, uptake and value-add of TA provision to SUN countries by TAN partners, MQSUN+ and NI; to explore how this has contributed to country progress; and to propose good practices in the design and provision of TA. It examines

how TA has added value through multi-sector outputs and, in the process of scaling up nutrition efforts, how TA can best be managed and leveraged for maximum benefit and sustainability. The brief also considers lessons learnt and recommendations for the continuation of TA processes. Learning is documented from examples drawn from eight SUN countries that received TA from MQSUN+ or NI between 2015 and 2019: Afghanistan, Burundi, Guatemala, Mozambique, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal and Yemen, selected for a representation of TA across a range of regions and contexts.

The brief is based on a review of country documentation and TA providers' internal analytical processes, such as exit surveys, progress assessments, project completion reports and handover notes. This material has been complemented with information gathered through Skype interviews with key in-country stakeholders, such as SUN Focal Points and Technical Focal Points, as well as representatives from the TA providers (see Acknowledgements). It was also informed by a session at the SUN Global Gathering in Nepal in November 2019 on sharing knowledge and harnessing learning around demand-driven TA, as well as the findings of the draft SUN Strategic Review Report 2019-2020.

Summary of findings

Designing and implementing multi-sector action for nutrition is complex and still new in many countries. By joining the SUN Movement, countries have access to technical assistance (TA) to build capacity and support the development of resources such as multi-sector nutrition plans (MSNPs), monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans and advocacy and communication strategies for nutrition.

Key findings, learnings and recommendations of the review of the value-add of the TA are summarised under the headings on the following page. Sections 3 and 4 provide more in-depth information and analysis, together with country examples.

Building country capacity at national and subnational level:

- Facilitating access to global expertise, standards, tools and guidelines, and supporting their adaptation for use in developing outputs appropriate to the country context, including multi-sector plans, M&E frameworks and other resources
- Integration of equity and gender equality considerations into SUN processes
- Promoting learning through doing by multi-sector stakeholders
- Improving soft skills, such as leadership and coordination, among country stakeholders
- Increasing understanding of the national and subnational nutrition situation, stakeholder landscape, and priority needs and gaps
- Defining technology needs and building capacity in its use

Moving country nutrition agendas forward; for example through:

- Supporting the identification of advocacy priorities for nutrition and building capacity in developing appropriate advocacy strategies
- Commitment of increased financial resources for nutrition-related programmes from domestic and international institutions
- Facilitating the integration of nutrition and nutrition indicators into key strategic processes
- Leveraging the development of strategy to advance other processes, such as the development of subnational plans and budgets for nutrition, advocacy and communication strategies, and M&E plans
- Galvanising multi-sector nutrition action at the subnational level

Supporting SUN country teams to foster an inclusive multi-sector approach; for example where:

- Stakeholders across sectors and at various levels have an improved awareness about nutrition
- Different sectors are clear on their roles in addressing malnutrition and their contributions are recognised
- Linkages and collaborations between sectors are encouraged
- Sector ministries recognise the need for dedicated nutrition budget lines and are instigating these or advocating for them
- TA outputs are developed, owned by and disseminated to a diverse group of national stakeholders



WFP/Tatenda Macheka/2020



WFP/Ladi Eguche/2018

The review noted a number of **best practices, lessons learnt and recommendations** for better managing and leveraging TA for maximum benefit and sustainability, including:

- For **TA outputs to be sustainably translated into practice**, they need to be matched by high-level country commitment and human, technical and financial resources, coupled with follow-on support for operationalisation and tracking of implementation.
- **TA should reach beyond a small group of stakeholders to a diverse range of actors across sectors**, bearing in mind inevitable staff turnover. TA outputs need to be widely communicated and disseminated to ensure onward use at all levels. Training manuals and knowledge management strategies, including intra-country and inter-country learning, can promote wider learning and uptake.
- **TA providers can serve to preserve institutional memory**, bridging gaps across changes in government, thereby maintaining and continuing country progress made in nutrition.
- Examining ways in which TA can be **institutionalised in country processes** was recommended by several key informants interviewed. This could be accomplished by setting up national and regional knowledge management (KM) platforms, by linking academic institutions to the TA while also building their capacity, by using TA tracking systems, and by holding TA coordination meetings.
- Despite the inherent **challenges in providing remote TA**, this has nevertheless promoted rapid country learning, and the ownership and leadership of processes such as contextual analysis, stakeholder consultation, action-plan development and costing exercises. Experience shows that TA can be successfully provided remotely by supporting national consultants who, in turn, can facilitate analysis, workshops and stakeholder discussions, and by setting up clearly agreed communication systems, making use of technology such as online conferencing and document-sharing tools. More needs to be done to ensure that remote support fosters exchange of lessons learnt from TA providers' experiences with other SUN countries.
- Facilitating and nurturing **government ownership and leadership** of processes and outputs has been an essential component in the success of TA.
- Framing TA outputs as flexible **guidance documents** can allow for adaptation to the realities of local contexts at subnational level and increase their uptake.
- To ensure **the most appropriate form of TA** in responding to country nutrition needs, country stakeholders noted the importance of ensuring adequate time to gather and carefully document the necessary detail and evidence across sectors to define key priorities and gaps to be addressed by TA.

2. Overview of the Technical Assistance provided in eight SUN countries

Country	Year of joining SUN movement	Type of TA	Details
Afghanistan	2017	Remote, medium-term (Mar 2018-Sep 2019) (MQSUN+)	Support to conduct a contextual analysis of the food security and nutrition situation; a multi-stakeholder mapping to understand the range of nutrition-related policies, strategies and activities and stakeholders; development of the Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda (AFSeN-A) Strategic Plan with logical framework, detailed costed activity plan and M&E indicator framework.
Burundi	2013	Remote/ In-country, short-term (May 2019-Aug 2019) (MQSUN+)	The country's National Technical Team (ETN) were supported to conduct a full costing of the new Multisector Food Security and Nutrition Strategic Plan (PSMSANII) 2019-2023 across five core areas (Governance and Coordination; Health and Nutrition Services; Access and Availability of Diverse and Nutritious Foods; Social Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction; Hygiene and Sanitation) and Nutrition Financial Gap Analysis for PMSAN II.
Guatemala	2010	Remote/ In-country, short-term (Dec 2018-Nov 2019) (MQSUN+)	Support to the previous Food and Nutrition Security Secretariat (SESAN) to conduct a review and make recommendations to update the Food Security and Nutrition Policy (FSNP) 2005 and related laws and regulation onward use by the new SESAN after change in government in 2019.
Mozambique	2010	Medium-term, in-country (2017-2019) (NI)	Support to development of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Strategy (2018-2025) and key policy / legal frameworks. Support for an in-depth Mid-Term Review of the National Multi-sector Plan of Action for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition (PAMRDC 2010-2015/2020), to review progress and provide strategic and implementation level recommendations across thematic areas.
Pakistan	2013	Long-term, in-country (2016-present) (NI)	Support for a range of processes, including: development of a Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategy with the Government of Punjab, development and roll-out of Punjab stunting reduction programme; strengthening multi-stakeholder platform and SUN networks in Punjab Province; development of food safety rules and standards (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir) and building capacity for enforcement; design and operationalisation of National Advocacy Strategy for Scaling Up Nutrition.
The Philippines	2014	Four long-term, in-country TAs (Aug 2016-present) (NI)	Support to the Philippines National Nutrition Council (NNC), sector stakeholders and partners to formulate the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2017-2022, launched May 2017. Followed by long-term assistance to: operationalise the plan and advance the national nutrition agenda, improve planning and delivery of nutrition actions at national, regional and local government unit level; document success stories and lessons learnt from subnational implementation; facilitate review and strengthening of monitoring and reporting of nutrition actions; strengthen SUN multi-sector platforms and NNC to become effective high-level advocates for nutrition.
Senegal	2011	Two medium-term in-country TAs (2017-2018) (NI)	Support to <i>Cellule de Lutte contre la Malnutrition</i> to develop a multi-sector M&E plan for the Multi-sector Nutrition Strategic Plan (PSMN) 2017-2021, including situational analysis, evaluation of the weaknesses and capacities of sector M&E and data collection systems, and development of M&E Framework with 63 nutrition-related impact and outcome-related indicators.
Yemen	2012	Long-term phased, remote TA (2013-2020) (MQSUN+)	Support since 2013 over several phases; most recently (June 2019 to February 2020) to update nutrition situational analysis and map nutrition actors and interventions, focusing on humanitarian/development nexus, development of the Multi-sector Nutrition Action Plan (MSNAP) narrative, preparation of M&E plan, development of an advocacy strategy and action plan, and updated costing.

3. Added value of Technical Assistance for Nutrition

The following sections report findings from the review (both from the literature and consultations with TA and country stakeholders) of ways in which TA provided through the TAN programme has added value to efforts to scale up nutrition in the countries selected.

Building country capacity in nutrition

Facilitating access to global expertise, standards, tools and guidelines for adaptation to country context

Country stakeholders described how TA to SUN countries has facilitated access to global-level expertise in nutrition and to resources and tools to which the countries previously did not have access. This has been used by countries such as **Yemen** and **Afghanistan** to improve and develop their own resources, adapted to their context. Stakeholders in Yemen reported that, through collaboration with MQSUN+, they adapted global resources and tools, including situation analysis, gap analysis, costing, a Common Results Framework (CRF)/MSNP, advocacy strategy, and an M&E framework to integrate country-specific information; for example, about vulnerable populations and zones and ensuring crossover between humanitarian and development responses. Stakeholders were also able to use global indicators and guidelines, such as Integrated Phase Classification thresholds to assess the situation, adding this to local knowledge to set their own targets within the CRF/MSNP.

A number of stakeholders reported how TA had built capacity in costing country plans. SUN country teams (SUN Focal Point, Technical Focal Point and Multi-stakeholder Platform members) and TA providers described how costing readiness assessments¹ in **Afghanistan** and **Yemen** helped to identify areas where additional information was required and guided country stakeholders in gathering this. This facilitated learning through doing and an improved understanding of the level of detail required relating to priorities, goals, objectives, actions, baseline coverage, annual targets, inputs needed and timeframe, allowing realistic, evidence-based planning. The Yemen SUN Technical Focal Point said: “We now feel equipped to conduct

our own costing exercises in future with limited external input, as we have the tools and experience across many different stakeholders”. In Afghanistan, additional support was felt necessary to facilitate costing discussions within sectors.

In **Burundi**, the SUN Focal Point described how the experience of conducting the costing exercise and financial gap analysis has increased capacity of the SUN Secretariat, ETN (Nutrition Technical Team) and the MQSUN+ National Consultant to conduct multi-sector costing and financial gap analyses. As a result, the ETN was able to confidently describe to partners financial methods and how details should be collected, ensuring that cost estimates were realistic.

Building confidence and leadership skills

National Nutrition Council (NNC) members reported how phases of long-term assistance significantly increased capacity in nutrition in the **Philippines** through strengthening the NNC Technical Committee, the establishment of a national team of NNC planning facilitators, implementation of national nutrition workshops and the development of training tools on nutrition. The TA facilitated the immersion of key NNC staff, members and partner agencies in the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) operationalisation, which reportedly led to a shift in government mindset and approach to nutrition. The NNC senior management team described how the TA enabled it to help PPAN priority provinces recognise the rationale for investment in nutrition and the first 1,000 critical days, and gain their commitment to this in terms of integrating it into provincial work plans and allocating budget. Improvements in the evaluative culture and practice of the NNC were also observed, leading to more effective and transparent management of the PPAN.

The SUN Technical Focal Point in **Afghanistan** described successful remote collaboration and support from the TA providers to the Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda (AFSeN-A) team, greatly facilitated through their acknowledgement of country

¹ An assessment tool that poses a series of questions to assess whether a country's Common Results Framework or National Nutrition Plan contains sufficient detail to enable an accurate costing process to be conducted.

WFP/Saikat Mojumder/2018



leadership of the process. Although challenging, remote support promoted rapid learning by the country team, enabling team members to initiate and lead all processes by themselves and to gain on-the-job experience of using various tools and approaches. Similarly, remote support from MQSUN+ to **Yemen** required robust leadership from the country team to set up and facilitate workshops independently, foster collaboration across the different sectors, and gather input for the different pieces of work, with support from the TA team in terms of frameworks, tools and analysis. Involvement in the planning and costing processes has promoted uptake and ownership of the plan across sectors, clarification of roles and responsibilities and leadership in nutrition at sector level, and given impetus to sectors to obtain funding for the actions identified.

The SUN team in **Burundi** noted that, through the data collection and gap analysis processes supported by TA, different sector stakeholders recognised the important contribution they can make in improving nutrition, which validated their work and improved confidence and motivation. Similarly, in **Senegal**, it was reported how the M&E plan has increased sector accountability, enabling visualisation of expected contributions and measurement of sector performance towards malnutrition reduction targets, and this has been a motivating factor for the sector stakeholders involved. In **Guatemala**, supportive statements and positive reinforcement of current achievements, country

capacities and progress in nutrition, focusing on the whole team of people involved in policy development and implementation rather than a political document, facilitated motivation from the country team.

Increasing understanding of national nutrition issues and the stakeholder landscape

The SUN Technical Focal Point in **Afghanistan** described how TA for conducting a contextual analysis enabled an in-depth understanding of the country nutrition context and the stakeholder landscape, and fostered a common understanding of nutrition concepts. This facilitated conversations around prioritisation, multi-sector engagement, consensus on common goals, clarity on respective roles and responsibilities, and more detailed joint planning. The SUN team was also able to identify a broader group of stakeholders to include in the AFSeN-A development process and implementation. The SUN team in **Yemen** noted an improved understanding among sector stakeholders of the impact of nutrition on socioeconomic indicators and, as a direct result of this process, nutrition indicators are being added to the national Health Management Information System.

In **Guatemala** it was reported that the initial joint Food and Nutrition Security Secretariat (SESAN) and MQSUN+ nutrition situational analysis helped to raise awareness among sector stakeholders relating to key

nutrition challenges in the country, including non-communicable diseases (overweight and obesity), food system inefficiencies, and the potential consequences of climate change.

Defining the appropriate technological solutions needs and building capacities for their use

Following the development of the M&E plan in **Senegal**, a review of M&E systems across 12 sectors assessed how to insert nutrition indicators and where the different systems needed upgrading. As a direct result, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has allocated funding to digitalise all monitoring systems by providing equipment and training across all sectors.

In **Pakistan**, NI has supported the development of capacity in food-commodity testing and has facilitated linkages to exchange knowledge and skills between provincial food authorities with differing levels of capacity in order to foster exchange and learning on this issue and use of machinery and technology.

Identifying advocacy priorities

Through MQSUN+ TA in the development of the country's first advocacy strategy, actors in **Yemen** learnt about setting priorities, understanding the audience, and developing messages and strategies for delivery. The SUN country team now feels that the required capacities are in place both at central level and across the sectors; they are able to hire and supervise implementation teams, start to raise awareness among high-level stakeholders and across ministries, and raise funds from development partners. As a result, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have already aligned with the plan and pledged funds; the country team is now working to attract the attention from other key actors, particularly for the nutrition-sensitive elements of the plan.

Undergoing the costing process in **Afghanistan** helped to illuminate key data gaps, raised awareness on funding needs and allowed for prioritisation of interventions and well informed resource-mobilisation advocacy efforts by the SUN Secretariat and platform members.

In **Senegal**, the M&E plan, alongside other tools such as a mapping exercise supported by the World Bank and an advocacy strategy, provided the *Cellule de Lutte Contre la Malnutrition* team with the comprehensive

evidence required to define priorities and to get actors round the table to commit resources. Donors including the World Bank and GAC have already committed funds.

Moving country nutrition agendas forward

Commitment of financial resources for national programmes

In **Pakistan**, TA supported the development of a national advocacy strategy for scaling up nutrition, which included the development of clear messages for sensitising the government on the value of investing in nutrition. As a result, the government has allocated 6 billion rupees (around USD 38 million) for the government-led Nutrition Improvement Initiative (NII), a large-scale nutrition-awareness programme, and 500 billion rupees (around USD 3 billion) for a national nutrition programme. Development partners are also investing resources.

In **Burundi**, the financial gap analysis supported by MQSUN+ is being used as an advocacy tool to secure commitment from government and donors for funding the entirety of the PMSANII. A presentation is being prepared for the National Council of Ministries to facilitate discussion and commitment relating to the financial requirements for each strategic axis of the PSMSANII and a donor round-table event is planned for the near future.

Launching of high-level nutrition governance structures

The nutrition advocacy strategy supported by NI in **Pakistan** highlighted the role of parliamentarians and policy-makers in tackling malnutrition, motivating the Prime Minister to speak of malnutrition on multiple occasions, and to launch the National Nutrition Coordination Council, whose membership includes government ministries, civil society, UN agencies and donors. A National Nutrition Forum has also been formed, tasked with reviewing progress on the NII.

Integration of nutrition/nutrition indicators into key strategic processes

In **Yemen**, following the onset of the conflict, the MQSUN+ TA supported the country team to review the national nutrition plan, ensuring the integration of humanitarian considerations and linkages with existing and planned development programmes.



WFP/Faizza Tanggol/2016

In **Mozambique**, following the recommendations of the NI-supported mid-term review of the National Multi-sector Plan of Action for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition (PAMRDC), core nutrition indicators have been included in the country's five-year development plan. As a result of the TA, an M&E matrix for the new Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (ESAN III) was developed and improvements were made to PAMRDC monitoring tools. Also, as a result of recommendations on strengthening capacity, a nutrition capacity assessment of Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) staff in 2018 led to the creation of a staff development plan for nutrition staff at both national and provincial level. In addition, based on TA recommendations, a local university and the Ministry of Education set up a capacity-building scheme through a tertiary institution, with a number of student graduates deployed for one year to gain experience in nutrition programming, and then absorbed as local-government staff members.

Stakeholders from **Afghanistan** described how the MQSUN+ TA process offered the opportunity for country actors to sit together, ask questions and strategically discuss the future and how to improve the nutrition situation in the country. They also noted how it has galvanised ministerial support to AFSeN-A and raised awareness of nutrition as a core development priority, increasing the commitment of different sectors to take action on nutrition. Nutrition indicators have been added to the country's Sustainable Development

Goals framework, removing the need for a separate M&E plan for nutrition and placing it at the heart of the country's development agenda.

In **Senegal**, a number of nutrition indicators were integrated into the Plan Sénégal Emergent (the country's national development plan) in 2018. The data collected is used to inform corrective measures to improve implementation of the Multi-sector Nutrition Strategic Plan (PSMN). The Ministry of Finance used the M&E plan in establishing the national Harmonised Framework for Monitoring and Assessment of Public Policies as it brings together multi-sector indicators.

Leveraging continued strategic processes

Stakeholders from Pakistan described how the national advocacy strategy for scaling up nutrition in **Pakistan**, developed through TA from NI, leveraged the development of a new government strategy on adolescent nutrition.

In **Yemen**, the SUN team in Sanaa is working with the transitional government in Aden to present the Multi-sector Nutrition Action Plan (MSNAP) and initiate a joint dialogue. Briefing sessions are planned for staff across five ministries of the transitional government in Aden on the process followed during the MQSUN+ TA. The SUN team will also share all materials and tools developed through the TA and offer training and support for the development and roll-out of their own plans.

Galvanising subnational, multi-sector nutrition action

In **Afghanistan**, the national plan is being used as a strategic framework for preparing plans at provincial level and multi-stakeholder coordination platforms have been established in some provinces. The plan has now been translated into two local languages and 1,000 copies are being distributed to most provinces.

Following the mid-term review recommendations in **Mozambique**, major strides have been made in improving coordination at subnational level, including a proposal for coordination structures at provincial level, and the extension of Food Security and Nutrition Technical groups initially established at provincial level down to district level. In one province, technical groups have been established in all districts. Coordination between the different sectors at provincial level has also improved, particularly between the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Health. Some sectors reported supporting the development of annual

provincial nutrition plans, as well as plans for the appointment of District Nutrition Focal Points where the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) was not present.

In **Senegal**, the establishment of the M&E Framework for nutrition coincided with the government implementing budget cuts, and the existence of the framework and its priority actions allowed for better prioritisation of scarce resources and planning of activities, avoidance of duplication, and alignment of sectors with the priorities outlined in the PSMN. The nutrition budget is no longer 'invisible' as the plan highlights where budget lines are needed for the activities identified. A number of partners and donors positioned themselves to fund the operationalisation of the framework. For examples, GAC has provided 10 million Canadian dollars (around USD 7 million) for the operationalisation of the framework.

In the **Philippines**, interviewees noted that the TA enabled the national government to understand the crucial role of local government in addressing malnutrition and enabling them to plan, budget, invest and implement pertinent programmes, particularly those focused on the critical first 1,000 days. The NNC invested resources in local government unit (LGU) mobilisation and developed national guidelines, policies and laws for LGUs and the mobilisation of sector agencies and development partners around the strategy. The government has also used the PPAN to develop guidelines on integration of nutrition in provincial/municipal development and investment programmes and included aspects of nutrition in the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP). Regional plans of action for nutrition and local nutrition action plans and budgets for 2019 have been developed in 36 PPAN provinces and constituent LGUs. Increasing numbers of local governments are prioritising the first 1,000 days as a key area for investment.

Fostering an inclusive multi-sector approach

In the **Philippines**, the development of the PPAN through a bottom-up and multi-level, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder participatory approach facilitated a good understanding of the different sectors' roles in addressing malnutrition and ownership of the final product. Sector stakeholders regularly use and refer to the PPAN and its derivatives as the main reference document or 'blueprint' in formulating their own plans and prioritising programmes and budgets, and in conducting day-to-day work.

The collaborative, multi-sector approach promoted through the TA to **Afghanistan** facilitated in particular greater cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, whereas nutrition-related workstreams had previously been quite separate. The contextual analysis facilitated by the TA also allowed for a better understanding of nutrition-related actions of all the different stakeholders in the country and challenged assumptions that nutrition was the concern only of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. Through involvement in the process, other sector stakeholders (for example, those linked to social protection issues, improving education, awareness and practices, or inadequate access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities) found they also played a significant role in addressing causes of malnutrition.

An inclusive approach in **Yemen**, involving actors from different sector ministries, civil society, business and development partners, ensured learning and capacity-building across a wide group of stakeholders, not just the core members of the SUN Yemen team. These actors have passed on their knowledge and shared tools within their own agencies.

The processes supported by the TA facilitated greatly improved linkages and collaboration between the different sectors, whereas they had previously worked quite separately. Recognising nutrition as a topic that concerns all sectors has encouraged working across sectors and in partnership, reducing conflict and disagreement around respective responsibilities. For example, the lack of agreement between several ministries around sector mandate and responsibility for food safety was resolved during the development of the multi-sector plan and CRF, and enabled all sectors to define and agree on sector roles and responsibilities and work together on them. These processes have also stimulated harmonisation and alignment of individual sector plans with the MSNP and civil society organisations are also now working to harmonise plans.

In **Senegal**, the M&E Framework clearly defines roles and responsibilities of each sector and many sector planning exercises take the PSMN into account as a result. For example, the Ministry of Livestock used the document to advocate for a budget line for nutrition and the Ministry of Agriculture used it as a planning tool for its nutrition activities. The plan has also enabled stakeholder participation at local and regional levels to define and prioritise nutrition-related activities and to plan, monitor and implement them. Sectors have also used the plan to define and improve data-transmission circuits, frequency of data collection, sources of data



and means of calculating indicators, including the Ministries of Industry, Fisheries, and Agriculture.

Inclusion of all stakeholders in TA processes is essential in building trust; ensuring that the SUN Focal Point is not seen as the only beneficiary of TA and that all feel adequately consulted and involved. Intensive involvement of the different stakeholders allows for more extensive detailed analysis and can facilitate ownership of and buy-in to the outputs produced via the TA.

Integration of equity and gender equality considerations into SUN processes

A focus on gender equality and equity in TA processes is a key donor requirement of TA providers and a few examples are given below on how processes and outputs have integrated these in Yemen, Afghanistan, Guatemala and Senegal.

An emphasis on gender equality encouraged by MQSUN+ during the contextual analysis and multi-sector planning processes in countries including **Yemen** and **Afghanistan** increased understanding of why prioritising women and children, as well as considering the unique needs of women, men, boys and girls according to the context, is important in scaling up nutrition. As an example, a new partnership has been established with a foundation for women and children in

Yemen and this is now a key stakeholder, contributing to the scaling-up nutrition agenda in the country.

Discussions during the TA process in **Guatemala** revealed the disparity in access to health services of indigenous people and a lack of commitment to close this gap. The review contains a recommendation to the new SESAN team to add an advocacy component to mitigate exclusion of indigenous groups and other marginalised groups from the new food security and nutrition policy.

Following a gender analysis which identified gender discrimination and the important role of women and girls in nutrition in **Senegal**, a full review of the M&E plan is being conducted to include nutrition and gender indicators which will allow for greater consideration of these issues across the different sectors (including health, agriculture, social protection, education and water, sanitation and hygiene).

Many outputs produced through TA include a section on addressing gender inequalities. Sex-disaggregated nutrition data is collected for boys and girls across all relevant sector and multi-sector indicators in most of the countries studied. This allows for the consideration of their unique needs in the design of appropriate programmes (for example, needs of young boys who have been recruited as child soldiers) and how to address them adequately.

4. How can TA be most efficiently managed and leveraged? Best practices, lessons learnt and recommendations

The review noted the following lessons learnt and recommendations on how to leverage and manage TA processes most effectively going forward:

Ensuring sustainability of TA outputs

The existence of high-quality multi-sector policies, plans and associated laws, guidelines and tools produced with the support of TA needs to be matched by commitment and human, technical and financial resources if their implementation is to be feasible. Human-resource gaps and lack of capacity in nutrition, particularly at decentralised level, represent a significant barrier to implementation. Despite the increased profile of nutrition, low levels of government investment remain a major problem in most countries, with few or no ministries allocating budget lines or taking steps to improve the flow of funds. Staff turnover and changes within ministries can be a real challenge to the sustainability and uptake of TA. Changes in the political landscape and resulting turnover in human resources across sectors can result in loss of institutional memory and in skills and knowledge acquired during TA processes. Respondents made a number of suggestions around how TA provision can be leveraged to help improve sustainability in the face of such challenges:



WFP/Cecilia Aspe/2018

• Follow-on support for operationalisation of outputs produced

Periodic follow-up after the delivery of TA can assess the extent to which objectives were achieved, how local capacity was strengthened and how the transfer of knowledge has benefited stakeholders.

All respondents noted the importance of allocating time for training and support to stakeholders after the completion of outputs to ensure sufficient capacity for subsequent implementation of the output produced. Setting up knowledge and experience-sharing platforms with TA facilitation to share insights and approaches across SUN countries was also proposed.

• Realising and tracking high-level commitment to action

TA provided to the Philippines encouraged decision-makers to publicly commit to actions and resource allocation for country plans during events such as conferences and round tables. Building capacity of national actors, including civil society, to track how commitments are subsequently being honoured could be an important role of TA provision.

• Ensuring TA reaches a broad range of sector stakeholders

This is important to ensure that capacity in nutrition is developed more broadly and not just within a small group, as this is dependent on individuals and turnover is inevitable. Country stakeholders, as well as TA providers, noted the need to look beyond SUN Focal Points/Technical Focal Points and reach a diverse range of stakeholders in providing TA. The development of training manuals, presentations and sessions, as well as the organisation of intra-country and inter-country learning, can also promote wider learning and uptake of TA.

• Ensuring institutional memory across changes in government

Experience from **Guatemala** and **Burundi** demonstrates how a TA provider can provide useful institutional memory on policy processes in a country, bridging the gap across government changes through the development of recommendations and tools to

facilitate work in the future and use this in supporting a new government to maintain and continue progress already achieved in nutrition.

• **Widespread communication and dissemination of TA outputs to ensure use**

Experience from the **Philippines** showed that raising awareness and ensuring continued reference to TA outputs and their use at all levels of government and the centrality of nutrition in securing the country's development are essential to its sustainable implementation. Several country stakeholders commented on the importance of putting hard copies of documents into the hands of decision-makers and implementers at all levels in raising awareness and use of outputs produced, and asserted that resources need to be allocated for this.

Remote support to fragile states

Remote support is necessary where the security situation does not allow for the international TA team's direct presence in the country, and experience from Afghanistan and Yemen has shown that this can be both a strength and a weakness, requiring careful planning and discussion between the TA provider and the country team on the most effective ways of working together. Challenges include problems with online connection, time differences, and lack of face-face interaction and exchange of experiences from other countries. Support to a nationally recruited consultant by providing guidance and relevant tools and presentations to facilitate workshops in the government language can help to ease communication and understanding. TA teams developed systems with country teams to suit their communication needs, including the use of online conferencing facilities (Zoom) and the use of Dropbox for group work on a single document.

Promotion of national multi-sector government leadership in developing outputs

TA providers stressed how the recognition and nurturing of government ownership and leadership (for example, through supporting the facilitation of workshops, presentations and stakeholder consultation processes) across all sectors facilitates continued and increased commitment and is an essential determinant of the success of the TA. In this respect, it is important that TA providers build trust and encourage co-ownership by the multiple government sector stakeholders in the process of developing outputs.

Ensuring utility of TA outputs to differing subnational contexts

The TA to the Philippines promoted the framing of the PPLAN as a guidance document rather than an instruction manual, which greatly facilitated its uptake as a flexible framework to be adapted to the many different local contexts, needs and priorities in the country. Similarly, in Afghanistan, the national plan was used to support detailed decentralised planning and operationalisation at provincial level.

Flexibility in the design and implementation of the TA

Although it is important to clearly define TA outputs and reach agreement on these between the TA provider and the SUN country team from the outset (rather than being contract/deliverable-oriented), flexibility and creativity on the part of both entities is key in ensuring that the final outputs respond to the needs and realities on the ground, and these may change over time.

Allowing time for building knowledge and evidence and defining priorities

Having the necessary knowledge, understanding the multi-dimensional nature of nutrition and evidence in place through rigorous processes, including contextual analysis, mapping and gap analysis exercises, is essential before the nutrition agenda can move forward. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of gathering and carefully documenting the detail and evidence required across sectors to define key priorities and gaps (for example, in terms of technical, human, financial and institutional capacity) and the types of investment required to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the situation before setting priorities, finalising frameworks and plans, and presenting to donors and inviting commitment and investment.

With respect to this, the short timeframes of TA can, at times, limit the quality and potential of the output. Stakeholders involved in TA to develop costed plans noted that costing analysis can only be based on information that could be collected or which actors were able/willing to provide. In fragile contexts, this requires an even longer time period for collecting the required information. In some cases, expanding the period of support would allow strengthening of capacities to compile detailed information and may improve the quality of the exercise.



Several stakeholders emphasised the need to allow time for detailed analysis and prioritisation of a country's TA requirements between the country team (including the multi-stakeholder platforms) and potential TA providers. The nature of TA requirements is complex and multi-faceted; this, in turn, requires a range of expertise, potentially across different sectors. Before agreeing on a Terms of Reference, a review of the types of support and range of TA providers that could address these and jointly defining the most appropriate approach and TA team profile was recommended. One stakeholder noted how lengthy TA approval processes can impact the timeliness of its provision. Coordination of all country nutrition TA processes by one focal point (agency or individual) was also suggested during stakeholder interviews.

Institutionalisation and coordination of TA at country level

According to the stakeholders interviewed, TA needs to be institutionalised in a more systematic way

within country processes, moving away from the development of outputs on behalf of the government. This could be achieved through negotiation with the government to define a mechanism to sustain TA outputs; for example, through recruiting a specific position, a dissemination and communication strategy, and/or strengthening their existing information-sharing platforms. For example, NI worked with national stakeholders in Pakistan to strengthen the online resource centre ('nutrition research information sharing portal') for archiving nutrition-related research and other relevant resources and to serve as a platform for knowledge sharing and interactive discussions on nutrition events and developments.

Involvement of academic institutions at regional and country level in TA processes and support to strengthen their capacity to sustain TA outputs was suggested during a session on TA at the SUN Global Gathering in 2019. One interviewee proposed a TA tracking system to improve visibility on the range of TA provided by different partners, ensure synergies, maximise scope and improve communication and coordination.

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