



European
Commission



Implementing decentralised information platforms for nutrition



*Insights and lessons
from Momostenango, Guatemala*

*International
Partnerships*

Cover: A young indigenous mother and her baby is getting ready to participate in a nutrition fair organised by the local authority of Todos Santos, Huehuetenango, Guatemala.
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Abbreviations

CADER	Centros de Aprendizaje para el Desarrollo Rural (Learning Centre for Rural Development)
CATIE	Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre)
COCODE	Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo (Community Development Councils)
COCOSAN	Comisión Comunitaria de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Community Commission on Food and Nutritional Security)
CODESAN	Comisión Departamental de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Departmental Commission for Food and Nutritional Security)
COMUDE	Consejos Municipales de Desarrollo Urbano y Rural (Municipal Development Councils)
COMUSAN	Comisión Municipal de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Municipal Commission of Food and Nutrition Security)
COMUSANNA	Comisión Municipal de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional con énfasis en la protección de la Niñez y la Adolescencia (FNS Municipal Commission for Children and Adolescents)
CONASAN	Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (National Council for Food and Nutritional Security)
DBM	Double Burden of Malnutrition
DC	Desnutrición Crónica (Chronic Malnutrition)
DIMUSAN	Dirección Municipal de SAN (FNS Municipal Directorate)
ENCOVI	Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida (National Survey of Living Conditions)
ENPDC	Estrategia Nacional para la Prevención de la Desnutrición Crónica (National Strategy for the Prevention of Chronic Malnutrition)
ENSMI	Encuesta de Salud Materno Infantil (Maternal and Child Health Survey)
EU	European Union
FNS	Food and Nutrition Security
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GCNN	Gran Cruzada Nacional por la Nutrición (Great National Crusade for Nutrition)
GIA	Grupo de Instituciones de Apoyo (Group of Support Institutions)
G-SAN	Herramienta de Monitoreo de la Gobernanza en SAN (FSN Governance Monitoring Tool)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INAB	Instituto Nacional de Bosques (National Institute of Forests)
INCOPAS	Instancia de Consulta y Participación Social (Instance of Consultation and Social Participation)
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Institute of Statistics)
InSAN	Inseguridad Alimentaria y nutricional (Food and Nutrition insecurity)
IT	Information Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAGA	Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food)
MIDES	Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Social Development)
MINECO	Ministerio de Economía (Ministry of Economy)
MINEDUC	Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)
MINFIN	Ministerio de Finanzas Públicas (Ministry of Public Finance)

MSPAS	Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social (Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance)
NIPN	National Information Platforms for Nutrition
PAFFEC	Programa de Agricultura Familiar para el Fortalecimiento de la Economía Campesina (Family Farming Programme for the Strengthening of the Peasant Economy)
PNUD	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (Nations Development Programme)
POASAN	Plan Operativo Anual de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Annual Operational Plan for Food and Nutrition Security)
POLSAN	Política Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (National Food Security and Nutrition Policy)
RENAP	Registro Nacional de las Personas (National Registry of Persons)
RSH	Registro Social de Hogares (Social Registry of Households)
SAN	Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Food and Nutrition Security)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEGEPLAN	Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia (Secretariat of Planning and Programming of the Presidency)
SESAN	Secretaría de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional de la Presidencia de la República (Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security of the Presidency of the Republic)
SIMSAN	Sistema de Información Municipal de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (Municipal Information System of Food and Nutrition Security)
SINASAN	Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional (National Food and Nutrition Security System)
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition Movement



A 3-year-old girl is dancing during an activity in an early childhood development center in Totonicapán, Guatemala. © UNICEF/UN0490996/Willocoq

Summary

This case study describes and reflects on the process of establishing an information platform on food and nutrition security (FNS) at the local level, in the municipality of Momostenango, in the department of Totonicapán, Guatemala, building upon the experience of the Guatemala National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN). There is an increasing interest internationally in understanding how decentralised political spaces of public administrations can engage in, and make use of, data and information for better

nutrition results. However, decentralised information platforms for nutrition are still rare, making it even less likely for decision makers to adopt an evidence-based approach, and the platform in Momostenango is one of few examples. The study provides insights for nutrition specialists and decision-makers into the nexus between nutrition, food security, health, governance and data utilisation, and includes the following lessons and recommendations:

Information management and analysis:

- exploiting routine sectoral data triggers high interest at decentralised level, as shown by the municipal information platform experience in Momostenango;
- achieving a functional inter-institutional structure, by establishing agreements with FNS actors at different levels, serves as the foundation for a multi-sectoral information platform;
- ensuring that local authorities and/or municipal-level sectoral offices publish the available sectoral data in a timely manner is an important first step;
- positioning the platform early on in political arenas, by disseminating and facilitating the use and interpretation of information by all stakeholders and consolidating processes for joint action, is crucial;
- facilitating internet connectivity at sub-national level is critical.

Capacity building:

- strengthening the institutionalisation of the platform is key to ensure continuity of processes and foster the consolidation of multi-sectoral decentralised teams;
- empowering and strengthening the competencies of the technical teams and of the decision and policy makers in the analysis and use of information all contribute to create sustainability;
- focusing on functional skills such as partnership building and facilitation of processes remains a high priority;
- boosting the capacity of civil society to participate effectively is equally important.

Create demand and increase the use of information:

- demonstrating in a concrete way how, on a small scale, information can effectively guide interventions and mobilise resources for the benefit of the most vulnerable is critical for demand creation;
- promoting the platform's concrete application contributes to convince governors of its potential and to empower them to advocate for central-level funding for scaling up relevant nutrition interventions;
- supporting processes to foster constructive engagement among all stakeholders is a continuous effort.

More details are found in the chapter 'Lessons learned and recommendations'.

Box 1: The NIPN Project in Guatemala

In Guatemala, the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) aims to support the efforts of the Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security of the Presidency of the Republic (SESAN, the national institution responsible for coordinating food and nutrition security across all sectors) to strengthen the National Information System on Food and Nutrition Security (SINASAN) through better management and use of existing multisectoral information to inform decision-making.

The NIPN's objective is to optimise the analysis and reporting of available information, and to contribute to the review of multisectoral policies and programmes, strategic and operational planning, monitoring and reporting on progress towards goals to reduce chronic undernutrition. The NIPN's direct beneficiaries are the institutions that make up the National Food and Nutrition Security System and indirectly the national and international donors that strengthen food and nutrition security (FNS). In Guatemala, NIPN is implemented by the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) in close collaboration with the SESAN and is funded by the European Union.

An important and innovative aspect of the NIPN project in Guatemala is the implementation of the nutrition information platform in a pilot municipality at the local level, in Momostenango in the district of Totonicapán.



Meeting with Juan Carlos Méndez, deputy director of CATIE to follow up on development and progress of the National Information Platform on Nutrition (PiNN) project. © CATIE/Unión Europea



Three indigenous girls are marching in the streets during a nutrition fair in San Juan de Atitán, Guatemala.
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The platform in Guatemala: a decentralised pilot at municipality level

Accelerating the fight against malnutrition: the challenges of local government

Identifying global and national malnutrition reduction targets is pivotal to drive change. Sub-national level governments play a vital role in ensuring that the targets are also achieved at the local community level, delivering the 'Leave No One Behind' agenda in their areas of responsibility. As policymakers, catalysts for change and key development actors, local decision-makers have a unique capacity to implement and monitor sustainable development, prosperity and well-being at the local level. To fulfil their role in realising FNS goals in their administrative areas of responsibility, local governments and local government associations need sufficient support from all levels of government, and adequate financial resources. In addition, they need to build their capacities to use appropriate information platforms and adequate knowledge-management methods.

The latest *Lancet Nutrition* series (2021) emphasises that socio-economic inequalities remain an important determinant of undernutrition, as also highlighted by findings in Guatemala. The country's Great National Crusade for Nutrition (GCNN) must therefore be focused and delivered to the most vulnerable populations in order to address persistent socio-economic gaps in nutrition¹. To this end, the decentralised use of information is essential for improved implementation and accountability. An innovative objective of the NIPN in Guatemala was to implement the nutrition information platform in a pilot municipality at the local level, in Momostenango in the district of Totonicapán, in an effort to respond to challenges that local governments face when implementing nutrition actions.

1 An analysis (Diálogos 2020) shows that municipalities with a lower incidence of poverty tend to benefit the most from social programmes such as the Bono Familia, while municipalities with a higher incidence of poverty benefit the least from the programme. This relationship particularly affects more rural municipalities, where a higher percentage of the population lives in poverty.

Box 2: Methodology

This brief study is mainly based on a two-track approach:

- A review of key documentation generated by the project, alongside a literature review (see references).
- Interviews with stakeholders of the NIPN project and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement in Guatemala, with key technical and political experts from the three levels of government (municipal, departmental and national). The institutions interviewed are part of the National Information System on Food and Nutrition Security and SUN and included specifically: the Vice-Presidency of the Republic, who at the national level presides over the National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (CONASAN); the Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security of the Presidency of the Republic (SESAN); technical experts of the Ministries involved in the GCNN (Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Social Development) that also include the municipal and departmental commissions of FNS; members of the Instance of Consultation and Social Participation (INCOPAS) where civil society is represented, and the European Union (EU) which is part of the “Group of Support Institutions” (or GIA) that brings together the cooperation agencies.

The platform in Guatemala focuses on three components:

1. data analysis, data management and systems creation (including the creation of methods to visualise information);
2. capacity-building through training, development and use of tools (including technical competencies and ‘soft’ skills);
3. promoting the use of outputs at national and local levels for political decision-making.

This paper presents the findings from the implementation of the Momostenango pilot and outlines lessons learnt and recommendations related to the three components.



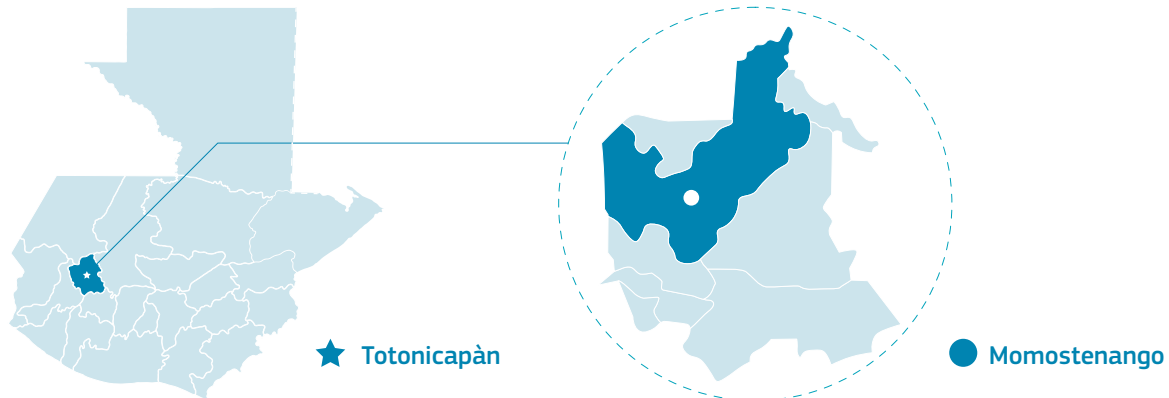
Women buying food for their families, Huehuetenango, Guatemala.
© WFP/Carlos Alonzo

Food and nutrition situation in the pilot municipality

Situated in the department of Totonicapán in the western plain of Guatemala, Momostenango has a population of 105 617 inhabitants², most of them rural (85%) and native (Mayan 99%, from the main language group K'iche') (**Figure 1**). The local economy is based on the combination of agriculture, internal and cross-border trade, and remittances that characterizes

the life of the highlands³. Agriculture is based on smallholdings, where most households produce maize and beans for their own consumption and vegetables, potatoes and fruit for sale. Local farms provide employment opportunities for households with limited access to land. Labour migration to coffee-growing areas is also very common.

Figure 1: Territorial scope of NIPN at the local level in Guatemala



Nutritional indicators show that all forms of child malnutrition are present and at levels above the national average (**Figure 2**). Approximately two out of three children under the age of five years are stunted, one in three is anaemic, and 5-8% are overweight (prevalence at the municipal level is 1.5 times that of the departmental and national level). The prevalence of acute malnutrition is classified as 'very low' (<2.5%) according to WHO public health thresholds⁴; however, it is three times higher in Momostenango than at department and national level. Among women of childbearing age at the departmental level, 42% are overweight and obese, and the rapid increase of this condition⁵ is of concern. The double burden of malnutrition (DBM)⁶ disproportionately affects disadvantaged socio-economic groups (low education, poor, and indigenous) in Guatemala, and in Totonicapán it affects up to one third of households (Ramirez-Zea et al. (2014); Mazariegos (2020); Batis et al. (2019); Jiwani et al. (2019)). DBM carries a high social and economic cost for Guatemala, recently estimated at 16.3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (ECLAC 2020).

The underlying causes of malnutrition are multi-sectoral. Inadequacies are found at household and community level, mainly with regards to (a) access to food, (b) maternal and child care practices and (c) access to water, sanitation and health services (**Figure 2**). In Totonicapán, only half of the infants less than 6 months old are exclusively breastfed, and half of infants 6-23 months consume an age-appropriate minimum acceptable diet, while only one third of households have access to sanitation. Other relevant indicators for underlying causes (schooling, female literacy, access to safe water) are worse at department level than at national level or are unavailable for Momostenango, illustrating how the data gap deepens at decentralised level.

2 XII National Population Census and VII Housing Census 2018

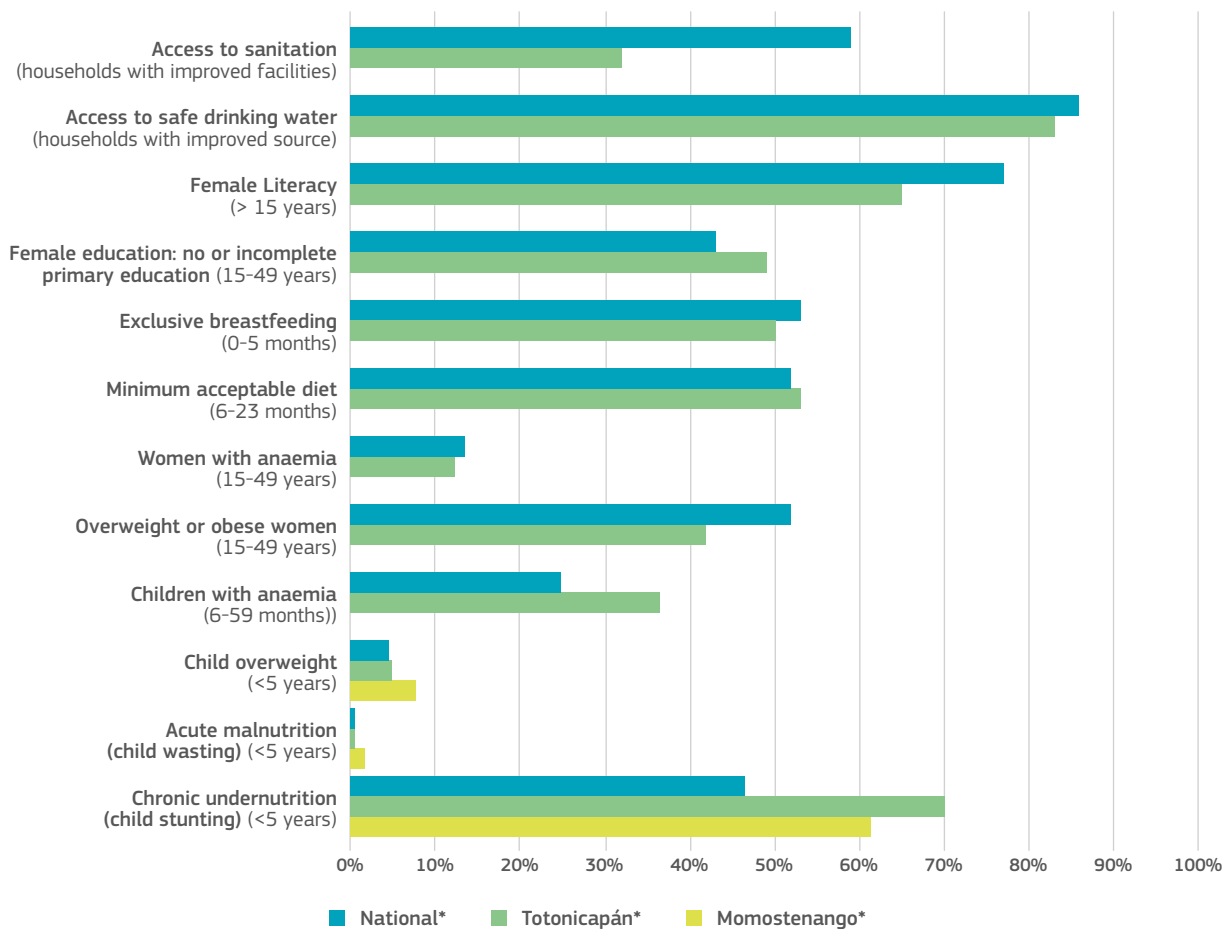
3 Totonicapán is classified in livelihood zone GT06: "Labour sales, subsistence staple grain production, vegetables, trade and remittances from the Western Highlands" (FEWS NET, 2016).

4 See WHO [Nutrition Landscape Information System](#)

5 In the South-west region, between 1995 and 2015, overweight doubled from 27% to 49% and obesity tripled from 6% to 18% (ENSMI surveys).

6 The double burden of malnutrition is the coexistence in a population of undernutrition together with overweight/obesity, or diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes, hypertension or heart disease). These diseases can co-exist in individuals, households and populations, and in all ages.

Figure 2: Main FNS indicators at national level and in Totonicapán and Momostenango



*Sources: SIMSAN-Momostenango 2018 and ENSMI 2014-15 for department and national indicators

Food insecurity is endemic⁷, as a result of a range of structural factors, including difficulties in access to land, lack of access to capital and agriculture extension services, low yields on small and marginal plots, and poor crop diversification. For most of the year, all socio-economic groups are highly dependent on the market for access to food. For many households it is more advantageous to forgo crops and buy staple foods.

The proliferation of low-cost, low-nutritional quality foods (junk food) in markets reduces dietary diversity, reducing the production and consumption of fresh, nutritious foods (Webb et al. 2016). Paradoxically, endemic nutritional food insecurity and child malnutrition exist in rural communities engaged primarily in food production.

Poverty and gender inequalities cut across all causes of malnutrition. According to the 2018 Census, Totonicapán is the department with the highest literacy gap between men and women (15.5%, compared to

the national average of 8.6%). Women's access to, use of, and control over land and other resources has historically been a constraint for development. In Momostenango, women are the main farmers in the Learning Centres for Rural Development (CADERs, the Ministry of Agriculture's extension system), and almost half of them are illiterate (SIMSAN [Agricultural Technical Bulletin](#)). In addition, climate change and recurrent natural disasters⁸ exacerbate social and food insecurity vulnerabilities, dramatically worsening rural livelihoods and the living conditions of poor households. Finally, rural poverty is very high in Momostenango (88% compared to 81% at department level) and extreme poverty doubles compared to department level (47% compared to 24%).

7 According to the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Analysis of Food Security Chronic Scale (Dec. 2018, Guatemala), 75% of households with chronic food insecurity (CFI) in Totonicapán were between Moderate CFI (moderate deficit in food quantity or seasonal deficit between two and four months during the year and consume a diet of inadequate quality) and Severe CFI (seasonal deficit in food quantity for more than four months during the year and consume a diet of inadequate quality).

8 The most common hazards affecting the area are prolonged heatwaves and in the rainy season, heavy rains and landslides, hail storms and strong winds.

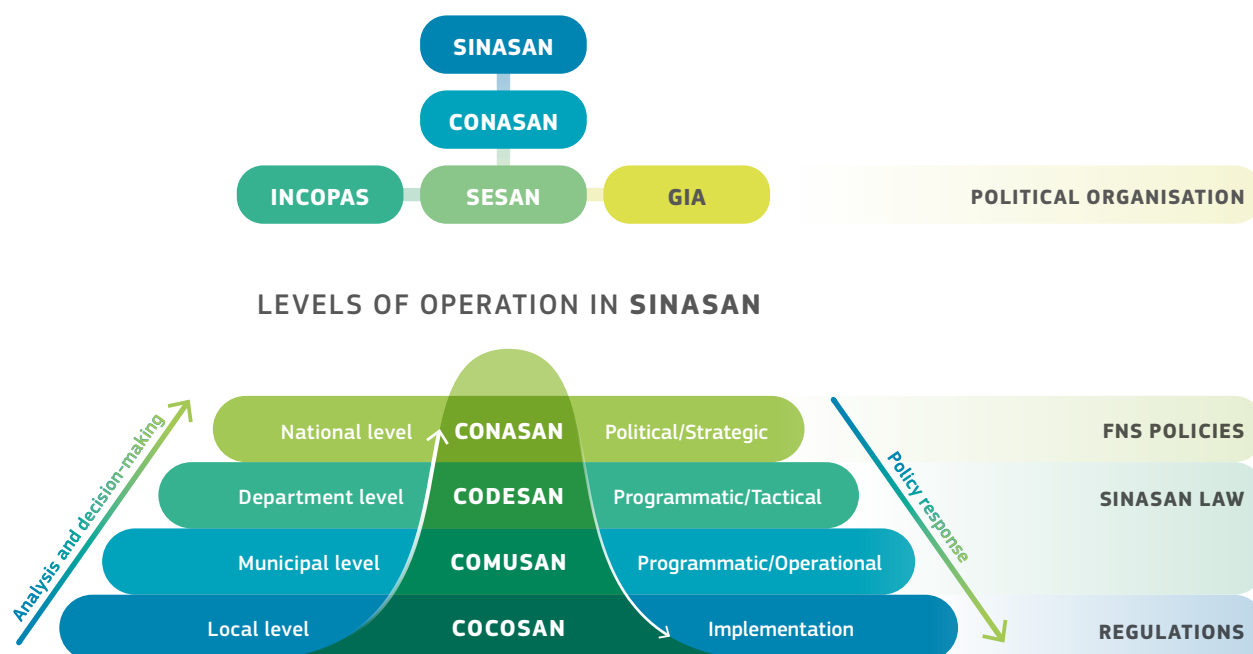
Key actors in Guatemala

The key actors of the NIPN project are the institutions of the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SINASAN), which is the organisational structure established by law (Decree 32-2005) that provides the strategic institutional framework of organisation and coordination to prioritise, harmonise, design and implement actions, in response to the National FNS Policy. At operational level, SESAN is in charge of the technical coordination and planning with the other entities of the system: INCOPAS, which gathers different sectors of civil society, and GIA, which represents

technical and financial partners. The National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (CONASAN) oversees steering and policy decision-making.

This legal and operational framework is supported by the following inter-institutional organisational structures: Departmental Commission on FNS (CODESAN); FNS Municipal Commission (COMUSAN) and FNS Community Commission (COCOSAN), which allow for consensual and timely planning decisions for the improvement of FNS at the decentralised level (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: National food and nutrition system (SINASAN) governance structure and levels of operation



FNS governance, as defined by SESAN, is the basis that regulates the performance of commissions and the quality of their management (**Box 3**). It highlights the need to improve awareness of the nutrition problem and ways to resolve it through coordinating stakeholders and building capacity appropriate to the cultural context (SESAN 2019). Globally, while the concept of governance in nutrition is addressed using different definitions and analytical frameworks (Kennedy et al. 2016; Gillespie, 2013; Haddad, 2012; Pelletier, 2012), they concur that

governance implies the *capacity to act*, the *power to act* and the *commitment to act*⁹. Governance requires accountability, responsiveness and transparency.

9 Governance can be summarised mainly in four elements that are widely recognised globally: 1) Multi-stakeholder coordination, partnerships and alliances, 2) Coherent policies, laws and plans, aligned action and integration, 3) Financial, organisational and human resource capacities, and 4) Information, monitoring and knowledge systems.

Box 3: Defining FNS governance in Guatemala

“Governance is defined as the system of rules, procedures and mechanisms according to which actors must coordinate, interact, decide and commit to actions and roles defined at all levels to improve FNS.” (SESAN, Estrategia Nacional de Gobernanza en Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Guatemala, 2016)

The multi-sectoral technical data that feeds the Municipal Information System of Food and Nutrition Security's (SIMSAN) virtual platform¹⁰ is provided by the following stakeholders at the national level:

- Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security of the Presidency of the Republic (SESAN)
- Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA)
- Ministry of Social Development (MIDES)
- Ministry of Education (MINEDUC)
- National Forest Institute (INAB).

At the local level, information is provided by these ministries' departmental or municipal offices as well as by municipalities such as Momostenango. The platform's information benefits different levels, but primarily the local level, including communities in the districts, political actors and institutions that make up the FNS Commissions, and other FNS stakeholders including civil society and international cooperation organisations.

10 The SIMSAN platform can also be fed by other actors such as civil society organisations e.g. studies, monitoring, etc.

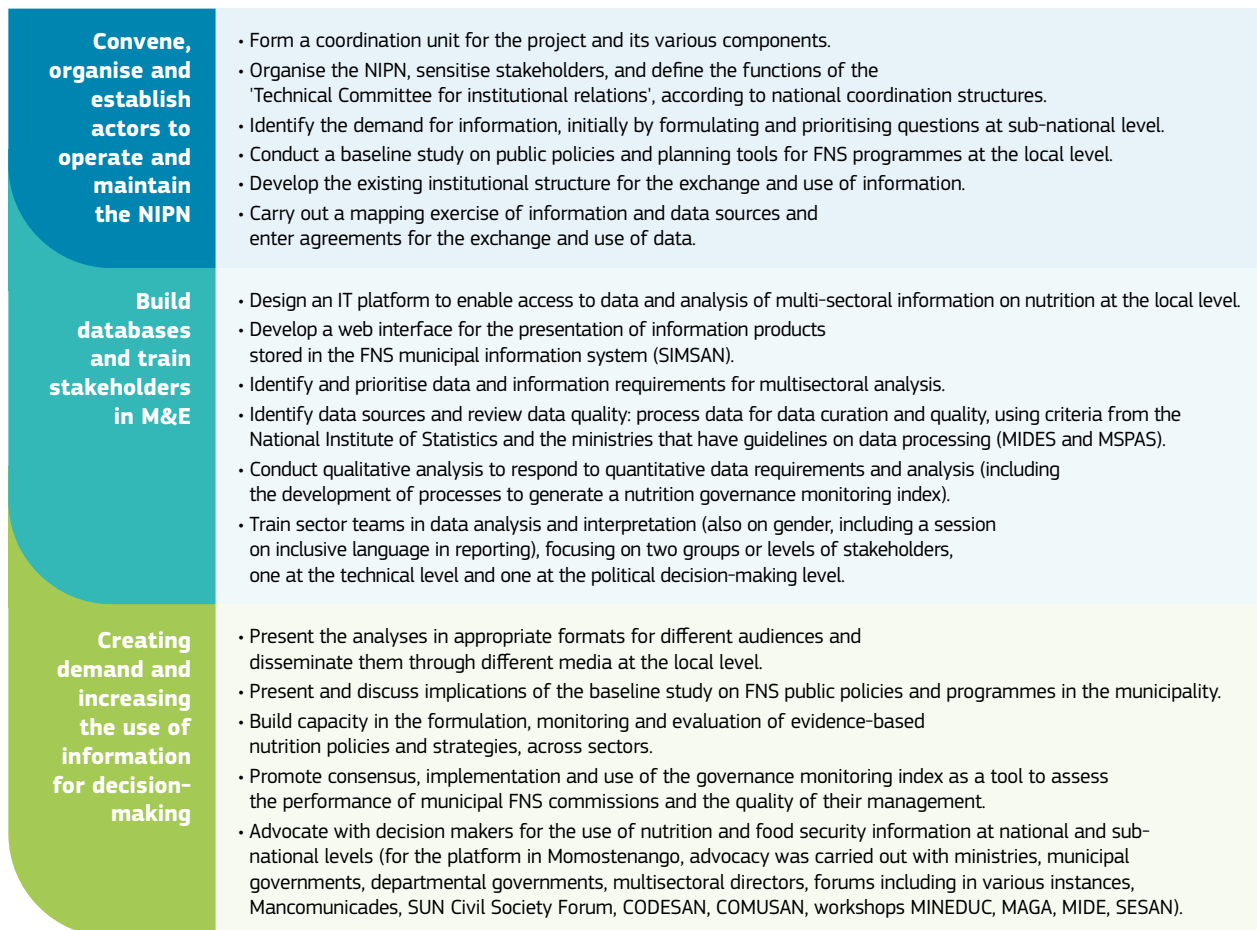


Meeting of the association of municipalities to address issues of nutrition and food security and local development in Guatemala, November 2020
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Implementing the decentralised platform: results and challenges

The diagram below (**Figure 4**) summarises the main planning steps and processes needed to shape the NIPN at the local level for each component¹¹.

Figure 4: Planning stages of the NIPN municipal implementation process



¹¹ It is important to mention that these steps are not unique to the implementation of the local nutrition information platform; some are similar for the implementation of the NIPN at the national level, with the difference that in the local case, actors are convened and based on local processes.


The main achievements, and challenges of the municipal platform can be summarised as follows (**Table 1**).

Table 1: NIPN's main achievements and challenges at the municipal level

	ACHIEVEMENTS	CHALLENGES
Component 1: information management and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements established with the different actors involved in FNS. • Mapping of multi-sectoral information sources carried out. • Institutional data (cleaned, timely and specific) organised and published in a single platform, known as the Municipal Information System for Food and Nutrition Security or SIMSAN (strengthening the national information system of SESAN), which facilitates access to quality multisectoral data (performing data-cleaning processes and verification of variables and indicator estimates), updated and disaggregated up to a certain level (health post). • Institutional actors defined with SIMSAN what can be achieved (and what cannot) and where improvements can be made in terms of coverage of interventions. • Computer equipment and adequate maintenance of the web platform (SIMSAN) secured with the support of CATIE. • Commissions/institutions linked to FNS strengthened in their capacity to converge on common objectives and articulate their efforts to address undernutrition. • Minutes and agreements published on the web platform and trust generated between partners in order to make processes transparent. • FNS governance index at local level developed with SESAN methodology and a tool for recording field information in real time (App) using smart forms and a dashboard to visualise the data. It is used by monitoring staff and departmental delegates on a quarterly basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional and policy changes (although the implementation of the project rests on the institutional, administrative and legal framework for FNS). • Unequal participation, interests and availability across actors and sectors. • Challenges in mechanisms for sharing experience and information. • Lack of staff, capacities and resources for cleaning, quality control and harmonisation of databases, at departmental and municipal sectoral and inter-sectoral levels. • Availability of computer equipment, accessibility and limited connectivity for users.
Component 2: capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of SIMSAN platform for the development/update and use of the municipal FNS policy analysis¹². • Full integration of the municipal platform into the institutional, administrative and legal framework of the FNS, which makes it easier to operationalise the platform, ensures the sustainability of the information system (SIMSAN) and creates better cohesion of the institutional team. • Project technical assistance tailored to demand and need, leveraging on existing local databases, systems and processes. • Technical competencies of institutional and municipal actors strengthened in: management and analysis of data generated by the sectors (mainly health), and in monitoring and evaluation of FNS strategies as well as results management. • Creation of the municipal directorate of FNS (DIMUSAN) with temporary funding of one civil servant's salary. • Training in the FNS governance index tool for SESAN monitoring staff at the national level on the use and application¹³ to promote mutual accountability processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are information systems that generate data, but they are not linked. • Inequalities in the availability and access to the primary databases of the institutions involved. • Data not all suitable for analysis, cleaning, different collection frequencies.
Component 3: creating demand and increasing the use of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions to be addressed by the platform identified and formulated at the local level which generates stakeholder awareness and political commitment. • Institutional actors involved in the Municipal Commission of Food and Nutrition Security/Departmental Commission for Food and Nutritional Security strengthened in their capacities to use information in the design and improvement of multisectoral nutrition policies and programmes. • Vulnerable groups in the territory are mapped with the platform and actors coordinate interventions (e.g. targeting of home gardens, distribution of food rations to households with acutely malnourished children). • Municipal Public Policy on FNS being reviewed/updated based on data from the platform (as recommended by the initial analysis of Municipal Public Policy on FNS) • The baseline study (Analysis of the Municipal Public Policy on FNS) highlighted the gaps between the theoretical planning tools, the implementation of interventions and the monitoring system of the sectors involved in the policy at the local level. • Information on gaps in terms of interventions and resources is helping municipal authorities to mobilise additional funds to implement effective projects to prevent malnutrition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The different levels of organising municipalities, financial and human resources mean that this third component of the municipal NIPN has advanced less than the other components. • Different degrees in understanding the issue at the political and technical level. At the political or decision-making level, the profile of the mayor can have a strong influence on the demand for planning and budget allocation at the municipal level of government institutions. • Training limited to theoretical knowledge. • Capacities in the use of information are not equal among users (e.g. among experts at the decentralised ministries and members of civil society) which represents a challenge to adapt training (either in content or in form) to the different levels. • The planning and budget allocation system is only partially decentralised (health sector more decentralised than other sectors) and is sectoral, leaving little room for local-level actors to modify budgets to local priorities, especially in nutrition, as well as for multi-sectoral plans.

¹² The project has provided technical assistance for the update of the municipal FSN policy. This process included the analysis and incorporation of data and information found in SIMSAN. SIMSAN data and information was constantly reviewed and used to provide content to the different chapters of the policy (situation analysis, programmatic section, monitoring and evaluation, among others). The policy is in its approval phase by the Municipal Council and COMUSANNA, then the operational and implementation process begins.

¹³ The application is an automated tool that, in real time, transfers the results to the SESAN database. Similarly, the FNS governance monitoring index tool (G-SAN) will provide a periodic opportunity for COMUSAN, led by SESAN, to review and make the necessary adjustments in terms of coordination, participation, transparency, etc., of FNS activities and processes in the municipality.



A woman breastfeeds her son (16 months old) in the community of Chicoy, Todos Santos, Huehuetenango. © UNICEF/UN0497335/Willocq

Lessons learned and recommendations

Information management and analysis

Lessons and recommendations for component 1:

- **The municipal information platform has shown that routine data from the sectors is better exploited at the decentralised level.** For example, mapping where and which interventions are implemented enables decisions on which areas need more attention.
- **Establishing agreements with the different FNS actors and achieving a functional inter-institutional structure at various levels provides the foundation for the multi-sectoral information platform.**
- **Ensuring that local authorities and/or municipal-level sectoral offices publish the outline sectoral data already collected in a timely manner, and standardising the quality of the data, is in itself an important first step.** As the pilot experience in Momostenango demonstrates, while technical and political challenges hamper the production of comprehensive, sufficiently detailed and timely sub-national information, there is much to be gained by simply publishing the data already collected.
- **In the short term, it is necessary to disseminate and facilitate the use and interpretation of information by all actors and to consolidate processes for joint action by positioning the NIPN in political decision-making spheres.** Feeding the platform with institutional data requires continuous attention to maintain the process. Information loses quality and credibility when it is no longer relevant for decision-making. More work needs to be done on the culture of information and communication technology use by key actors.
- **Facilitate internet connectivity for actors at sub-national level.** Identify partnerships at decentralised level and support the mobilisation of resources to improve connectivity and availability of equipment. In the meantime, look for alternative solutions such as making use of local radios and social networks to empower youth.

In more detail

- **Different institutional arrangements were required with the actors involved, always ensuring the greatest possible integration with the national system.** As the FNS coordinating body, the first step was to formalise an agreement with SESAN. The platform achieved full alignment with SESAN's policies ensuring that the findings were integrated as closely as possible within the national system, including the system for accessing and visualising data and information. In addition to establishing the agreement with SESAN at the municipal level, agreements were signed with other decentralised ministerial institutions and actors, with different arrangements depending on the nature of the actors and how they are organised and represented at the decentralised level. For example, some required an arrangement at the central level to allow access to local data (e.g. Ministry of Social Development); for others the arrangement was established at the departmental level (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture). For all of them, the departmental level played a central and bridging role in opening doors to the various decentralised levels and to the work in the pilot municipality. This shows the need to understand and be aware of the structures of local institutions and to conduct agreements at the appropriate level in order to achieve full coverage.
- **Routine data published in a timely manner on the platform is better utilised at the decentralised level.** Some actors are already used to presenting their data for decision-making (for example, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance has decentralised 'situation rooms' where acute malnutrition is monitored in 'real time'). However, the vast majority of routine data is very scattered, difficult to access or only partially used because it is mainly reported at the central level (vertical flow of information). By organising the information within a Municipal Information System of Food and Nutrition Security (SIMSAN), the institutional data (cleaned, timely and specific) of the various sectors and actors are centralised and are published on a single multi-sectoral platform, allowing the information to be used by the decentralised FNS Commissions to exchange and triangulate information and so obtain a common understanding of what to do. This represents the first step towards a horizontal organisation of information flow that responds to the needs of local users, empowering them to understand and act at their level.
- **The mapping of which nutrition interventions serve which groups and where, contributes to making data-driven decision-making transparent.** Information on interventions (e.g. how much institutions are investing, how many/which beneficiaries they serve and where, with which interventions, etc.) allows institutional actors to assess what can (and cannot) be achieved and where improvements can be made in terms of intervention coverage. This visualisation of data and multi-sectoral information at the decentralised level in itself contributes to greater transparency of data-driven decision-making.
- **Extending access to multi-sectoral information to civil society organisations and making processes transparent is a first step towards building trust between actors, facilitating civil society participation and thus their ability to conduct social auditing.** From the perspective of civil society actors, the municipal platform is an important first step to facilitate access to quality, updated and disaggregated multisectoral data (down to local health post) and to carry out social audits of public services for the population. Most interviewees highlighted its potential to drive transformative change in empowering communities to influence policy (which is the basis for the realisation of the SDGs). Also, having meeting minutes and agreements posted on the platform has helped to make processes transparent and build trust, thus creating an enabling environment among partners.
- **In the municipality, actors have unequal access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and so need alternative solutions; in the same way capacities for data cleansing and quality control at the decentralised level are limited.** The project's support for resolving barriers in information technology (availability of computer equipment and the strong capacity of CATIE's internet platform) has allowed the platform to function well in Momostenango. At a decentralised level where IT resources are limited and it is not always possible to guarantee access to them, it is necessary to take into account the existing inequalities and to look for alternative solutions suited to the situation of the various stakeholders (including local radio stations and social networks). This provides for the possibility of replicating and scaling up the experience to a larger number of municipalities.
- **Maintain effective teamwork within the FNS commissions (avoid working in silos) and strengthen their evidence-based approaches.** The inter-sectoral information system at the municipal level (previously absent) has strengthened institutions linked to FNS to converge on common objectives and articulate their efforts to address undernutrition. Above all, the commissions now feel empowered to share data to higher authorities and boost their ability to articulate their needs based on evidence. The achievement of this outcome (which could be defined as the 'soft' aspect) has been mainly facilitated by the project and CATIE's capacity building, with the roll-out of the initial baseline study on the policy diagnosis and activity frameworks related to the existing data and information.

- **The availability and visibility of information on the different forms of malnutrition (chronic malnutrition, acute malnutrition, overweight, micronutrient deficiencies) need to be improved to enable these to be addressed comprehensively.** Although the health system records routine weight and height measurements, there is a tendency to

concentrate the analysis on acute malnutrition. This reduces the visibility of the most prevalent issue, chronic malnutrition, and of the increase in overweight and obesity, which constitutes a high risk for the increase of chronic diseases, which are also risk factors for increased mortality, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations for the next steps of component 1

Rec. 1.1 Linking multi-sectoral information with a monitoring and evaluation system will strengthen its use and impact on local level decision-making for decentralised planning and budget allocation.

Information would be further used if it was linked to a monitoring and evaluation system to track progress and inform decision-making. This would give each institutional actor (decentralised ministries) the possibility to act on the available information, not only to improve planning, but also to adjust the actual implementation of interventions. Currently, the planning and budget allocation system remains centralised, leaving little room for manoeuvre for actors at the local level. This constitutes an obstacle to the uptake of information for decision-making at the local level.

Rec. 1.2 Disaggregate data down to the individual level and link it to the social register system and integrate it with other sources of information provided by civil society (user level).

As highlighted by several interviewees, the next step for the platform would be to have disaggregated data at the individual level (beneficiary of interventions) and link it to the Unique Identification Code (National Registry of Persons, RENAP). Data could also be integrated with more qualitative information on access to basic services. The multi-sectoral platform would thus have real potential not only to ensure social auditing, but also to contextualise and improve the analysis of institutional data and information.

Rec. 1.3 Further disseminate information at the decentralised level, enhance the analysis and use of the platform's information by strengthening the active role of civil society, including by integrating sources of information from civil society (qualitative studies).

In order to boost participatory and constructive citizen action, it is necessary to systematically disseminate information more widely (by publishing the products and showing their added value), reaching out to those who influence public opinion at both local and national level, e.g. influencers on social networks, radio stations, schools, public events, columnists, academic circles, etc. More generally, civil society organisations and academia can contribute to specific studies with relevant data and information

on FNS, highlighting persistent inequalities between population groups. This information can help to focus the action on groups that are left behind. There is also an opportunity to invest in 'citizen-generated data' to monitor the SDGs and implement the 'leave no one behind' principle. 'The ultimate objective in demand-driven development data is the poor or vulnerable gathering – and using – that data themselves' (ODI 2021). The platform should not only serve as an institutional but also as a social auditing role at the decentralised level. This provides a basis for further advocacy and positioning in policy arenas to increase citizen participation and accountability, elements that will strengthen nutrition governance at the local level.

Rec. 1.4 Consider inequalities in access to information and communication technologies (ICT) at sub-national level to expand the dissemination and use of information by all users, promoting a culture of using information technology.

A challenge at sub-national level is insufficient IT and communication technology knowledge and use by the main beneficiaries. In this regard, there is room for improvement in making information user-friendly to promote its correct interpretation (e.g. very technical content for some less-skilled actors) and making it known to the municipality's entire population (e.g. using local radio and social networks to empower youth).

Rec. 1.5 Data management capacities need to be strengthened at the departmental level and where possible at the municipal level, through the allocation of staff and training.

A major challenge for the continuity, replication and scaling up of municipal platforms is the limited or even non-existent capacity for the management of sector-produced data (quality control, cleaning, harmonisation, etc.) prior to its incorporation into the platform. Improving these capacities is important in order to facilitate the replication of this pilot in other regions.

Capacity building

Lessons and recommendations for Component 2:

- **It is important to strengthen the institutionalisation of NIPN to provide continuity to the process and encourage the consolidation of multi-sectoral decentralised teams.** Sub-national processes tend to be slower and capacity development is a long-term objective. To this end, context-specific approaches need to be developed in order to maintain the necessary structures for institutional coordination, with a special focus on strengthening financial, organisational and human resource capacities. The process should include advising and providing resources to local institutions as well as tailoring capacity-development approaches on a demand-driven basis.
- **Institutionalising the platform in the municipalities and empowering and strengthening the competencies of technical teams and political decision-makers to analyse and use the information is important for sustainability,** which could encourage the actors to maintain the platform and use it in the decision-making process.
- **Focusing more on functional skills such as building partnerships and facilitating processes.** Developing soft skills to foster partnerships requires a coaching approach. Acting as a mentor goes beyond providing demand-driven technical assistance. It is a different way of working that requires strong stakeholder engagement skills, process facilitation, knowledge translation and communication, as well as technical expertise.
- **Strengthening civil society capacities for effective participation.** Enabling civil society to contribute to the decentralised platform represents a window of opportunity to leverage their active contribution considering the key role they can play in monitoring services at the community level, in conducting social auditing and providing a more effective contribution to the FNS.

In more detail

- **Establishing the municipal multi-sectoral platform in Guatemala's FNS policy and legal framework is a key element for capacity development.** The ownership of the platform by the decentralised authorities and their empowerment is proportional to the success of the project in establishing itself in the institutional, administrative and legal framework of the FNS. Ownership and empowerment facilitate better cohesion between teams at different institutional levels, provide the possibility to develop more integrated analyses, and promote sustainability. Having a political and legal framework is a necessary precondition for initiating multi-sectoral platforms in other contexts.
- **Flexible, demand-driven technical assistance that leverages on existing systems and processes.** The project team has been able to modify working arrangements according to demand, demonstrating clarity of purpose rather than operating according to preconceived solutions and tools to respond to the multi-sectoral information system. This, in turn, made it possible to work on a solution based on the national system and build on what already existed within SESAN's multisectoral information system. For example, the project team has sought entry points where the basis of an established information system already existed (as in the case of the municipality of Totonicapán), leveraging on the proposals elaborated by the local technical teams and tailoring the platform to the local-level demand. This in turn has empowered local technical teams to generate interest at the political level. Other examples of the flexibility of the technical assistance include the request for support to manage and analyse nutritional data for the active search for acute malnutrition, and the training in monitoring and evaluation of FNS strategies for municipality of Momostenango technical staff as well as other institutional actors. The project's flexibility in adapting and adjusting also underlines the importance of the level of trust between donors and the implementer.
- **The sectoral working teams have strengthened their technical capacities for analysis (quantitative and qualitative) and interpretation of multi-sectoral data, and 'broadened their interest' in the use the information to improve the design, monitoring and evaluation of interventions.** With the support of the project, the technical competencies of public

sector institutions have been strengthened. An example of this is the management and analysis of nutritional data generated by health posts to improve the usefulness of active epidemiological surveillance at the decentralised level. Strengthening technical competencies in the interpretation of multisectoral data has generated interest among actors to further widen their skills, in particular to better understand how to utilise data and available information to influence decision making¹⁴.

- **Institutionalising the platform at the municipal level and empowering local technical teams have laid the foundation for ongoing demand and sustainability.** The project's approach has gone beyond delivering training sessions to institutionalising the project by creating the Municipal Directorate of FNS (DIMUSAN) and partially funding the salary of a civil servant. This is important for continuity and sustainability, especially when there are changes of government.
- **The governance monitoring tool (G-SAN) contributes to building trust among actors.** The FNS governance index with its established methodology and graphic visualisation tool (App) has contributed to monitoring the performance

and participation of institutions in the municipal commission of food and nutrition security (COMUSAN) in their capacity to respond to FNS issues. For example, at the local level, CSO representation is high but citizen participation is limited (this varies according to the specific dynamics and context) due to limited resources and capacities, and low interest. This tool has the potential to reinforce the commitment to improve citizen participation, in particular indigenous participation and to foster social auditing.

- **Capacity development of both institutional and non-institutional actors is necessary, but requires time and resources to adjust to the specific needs of each group.** Capacity building at the decentralised level is more complex than at the national level, as stakeholders vary greatly in their nature, objectives and initial capacities, and therefore requires that approaches and tools are adjusted to address and adapt to the needs of different groups.

Recommendations for the next steps of component 2

Rec. 2.1 Frame capacity building activities for the platform in a long-term objective logic and extend them to other key groups for governance.

It should be recognised that sub-national processes tend to be slower and that capacity development is a long-term objective that does not respond to the logic of short- to medium-term projects. At the sub-national level, such as Momostenango, the platform has not been equally available to all intended users, particularly civil society actors with fewer capacities and resources. Although the report on the use of the municipal information system of food and nutrition security (SIMSAN) does not have disaggregated statistics on web users, it would be useful to know at what level the greatest demand¹⁵ originates. Strengthening these actors is important for their role in monitoring services at the community level, conducting social auditing and providing a more effective contribution to the FNS governance domain.

Rec. 2.2 Further strengthen soft skills to ensure political commitment to nutrition and the sustainability of the platform.

Several interviews, whether with technical experts or policymakers, have highlighted the challenge of how to maintain political will and inter-agency commitment to address the multi-sectoral issue of nutrition, including the sustainability of the platform. This highlights the importance of functional capacities¹⁶ at three levels, namely the individual level (e.g. communication, problem-solving), organisational level (e.g. oversight/management and organisational including appropriate human and financial resources for effective platform implementation) and systemic level (commitment, leadership, relationship and consensus-building). These skills are fundamental to creating a culture change in political awareness and commitment to nutrition. Sometimes this translates into accompanying territorial policy initiatives that are not directly related to the platform but are important in creating cultural change.

14 The different coordination spaces (COCOSAN, COMUSAN, CODESAN and CONASAN) that make up SINASAN include technical staff, management and authorities. In this way, the different activities (courses, forums, etc.) strengthen the capacities of all the members of the spaces.

15 SIMSAN usage reports detail the number of consultations made, the number of people consulting, and the average number of pages consulted per user, but it is not possible to differentiate by users or to generate a typology of users.

16 The four functional capacities are: (1) **Policy and regulatory**: the capacity to lead policy and legislative reforms; (2) **Knowledge**: the capacity to create, access and exchange information and knowledge for evidence-based decision-making; (3) **Partnership**: the capacity to initiate and maintain networks and alliances for improved coordination and partnerships; (4) **Implementation**: the management capacity to implement and deliver (from planning to monitoring and evaluation) projects and programmes efficiently and effectively, supported by adequate human and financial resources.

Rec. 2.3 Focus more on capacity building among users on using information for decision making, also in monitoring and evaluation of interventions for more effective programme implementation.

For planning, monitoring and evaluation, a lack of appropriate capacities at a corresponding level among different institutions' technical staff limits the adequate monitoring of service delivery at the outcome level and the process of results prioritisation. It is noteworthy that few actors work with results-based management (mainly Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance) and that there is a scarcity of data at the intermediate level of results ([NIPN Guatemala case study](#), EU 2019). This is also true for the governance monitoring tool, where trainings should include how to use this self-assessment to improve the municipal commission of food and nutrition security (COMUSAN)'s performance and the quality of its management.

Rec. 2.4 Focus more on financial, organisational and human resource capacities as an essential component for effective governance

A persistent challenge highlighted in the interviews is to maintain the political commitment of the municipality to internalise the human resource costs of the office so that it continues to support and lead in FNS decision-making. The project has tried, as far as possible, to work on various aspects of governance, including the financial and human capacities needed to achieve the ultimate goal. However, these dimensions are not sufficiently highlighted in SESAN's governance framework (see definition in Box 3), which has limited its approach at the decentralised level. Financial, organisational and human resource capacities are essential for effective governance. Where governance is strong, these mechanisms will be established, interactive and mutually reinforcing at national, sub-national and community levels.

Uptake of information use and demand creation

Lessons and recommendations for Component 3:

- **Demonstrate in a concrete way how, on a small scale, information can be used to guide interventions and mobilise resources for the benefit of the most vulnerable.** Creating demand for the use of data-driven decision-making will be a gradual process and require cultural change in Guatemala. Focusing on specific and concrete activities or exercises on how data-driven decision-making leads to better FNS results, and to improving nutrition, could stimulate adoption of the platform and its effective use, but this is a challenge (it is seen as an 'additional workload'). Also, underlining how a lack of timely decisions has a direct effect on a person's health or life, and avoiding it being considered solely in terms of budget allocation or resource use.
- **Promote the platform's applications to convince governors of its potential.** The information from the platform is being used to update the municipal FNS Public Policy and is optimising the delivery of services. It also mobilises resources and partnerships at territorial level for nutrition-sensitive actions (with potential for public-private partnerships). Disseminating these experiences among policy actors and share the use of platforms as collaboration model will be key.
- **Continue to support processes to foster constructive engagement among all stakeholders** to effectively address and sustain interventions to prevent malnutrition.

In more detail

- **The demand for, and use of, strategic information needs to be stimulated from the outset through a process of question formulation and it requires specialised analysis and facilitation.** Demands for, and use of, policy information need to be stimulated from the outset and are not necessarily pre-existing. One way to stimulate demand is through the formulation of questions proposed by NIPN. The formulation of questions to be addressed by the

platform requires preparation and facilitation by an external group (as in the case of CATIE) with skills and experience in this process (this in itself is a learning process that should not be underestimated). The analysis of the municipal FNS Public Policy has helped to contribute to address findings and observations made during the revision of the policy (for example, on the issue of monitoring and evaluation, leading to a better definition of targets and indicators).

- **At the decentralised level the process of formulating questions to increase demand and use of information is easier than at the national level.** The process of formulating questions is difficult, but less so at the decentralised level because the demand is greater. Decentralised actors are quicker to show interest about its use in decision-making, whereas at the national level, decision-making power may be more diluted.
- **By formulating the questions, actors gain awareness and the political commitment to use the information for decision-making.** This process is the first step and main achievement of the multistakeholder platform at the municipal level. At this level, factors that could influence how well information is used include the municipal structures at different levels, financial resources and the staff commitment. Translating information into action takes time (more than knowledge) but raising awareness at the outset is also more likely to sustain stakeholder demand in the future by directly presenting the platform's benefits.
- **Information generated by the platform enables actors to see how it can be used in their interventions.** The scarce financial resources available for measures to prevent chronic malnutrition is a major challenge for municipalities. People on the municipal commission of food and nutrition security (COMUSAN)/departmental commission for food and nutritional security (CODESAN) recognise that the platform's multisectoral information enables them to better identify the most vulnerable groups (who and where they are) and to coordinate interventions. In Momostenango, some examples mentioned are: the delivery of food rations to households with acutely malnourished children (Vice Presidency, SESAN), the targeting of family gardens to improve access to nutritious vegetables in households with more acute malnutrition than others (Ministry of Agriculture), achieving a more integrated approach to growth monitoring activities and vaccinations (Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance). At the departmental level, another potential use of the platform is to promote the actions of the 'Bono Social' programme, a social protection programme for the most vulnerable households (Ministry of Social Development).
- **A timely use of the platform is to improve/contextualise municipal FNS policy based on actual data.** While a training plan for monitoring and evaluating the municipal FNS Public Policy was being developed, interest emerged in revising the policy itself. Information generated by the platform is being used to update the municipal FNS policy (currently being finalised) and stakeholders are beginning to see its usefulness in optimising service delivery. The initial analysis highlighted some weaknesses in the municipal policy. For example, on many occasions in the public policy cycle, documents were designed and then not operationalised or implemented. On the other hand, the municipality, through the FNS municipal commission for children and adolescents, was interested not only in updating the policy document, but also in creating the Municipal FNS Directorate and the Municipal FNS information system. These processes place the issue of FNS as a local priority.
- **Through the platform, it is possible to influence the mobilisation of additional financial resources for projects to prevent malnutrition.** The information gathered through the platform on the gaps in interventions/resources at the decentralised level is helping authorities to mobilise funds at the local level, including for public-private partnerships. This has been the case in Totonicapán municipality which has promoted a pilot plan, with co-funding from NGOs (Helvetas), for a cooperative of women entrepreneurs (mothers with acutely malnourished children), guaranteeing the sale of their hens' eggs through an agreement with the hospital (an initiative that will be replicated with other cooperatives that sell vegetables and chicken meat). The pilot is an example of how the platform helps mobilise resources and partnerships at the decentralised level for nutrition-sensitive actions, with the potential for public-private partnerships.
- **The platform can help to advocate for the FNS budget to be allocated according to needs at the decentralised level.** Despite the platform's limitations (it is yet to be linked to the planned budget allocation and monitoring system), its information already helps to advocate for a change in the allocation of resources at the central level and to empower decentralised actors in discussions with the central level. The platform's achievements have even sparked the interest of central level actors to support the prioritisation process. This demonstrates that the investment made in setting up the platform at the decentralised level helps advocacy in two areas: budget allocation and prioritisation.

Recommendations for the next steps of component 3

Rec. 3.1 Increase emphasis on how to use the multi-sectoral platform to influence and improve prioritisation and budget allocation as well as intervention implementation.

Due to the limited duration of the project, the platform has yet to demonstrate its potential to improve nutrition interventions. In subsequent stages, it will be important for decision-makers at the local level to understand the added value of using the information to set priorities and allocate budgets and implement interventions, etc. This will help to sustain the platform by maintaining the demand for information.

Rec. 3.2 Match the platform's potential by advocating for an FNS budget that is more responsive to the needs of the territory.

The main potential of the platform, according to the stakeholders interviewed, is its capacity to influence departmental-level decisions made by Community Development Councils (COCODE) and leverage public investments at the decentralised level. Although budget prioritisation in FNS is still addressed centrally, the platform empowers sub-national governments to define their priorities and influence this process¹⁷. On the other hand, central-level actors (such as the Secretariat of Planning and Programming of the Presidency - SEGEPLAN) have also shown interest in the usefulness of NIPN information to ensure that FNS budget prioritisation is more responsive to the needs of the territory.

Final thoughts on scaling up

At the Guatemalan level

- Before the project's end, SESAN requested that the SIMSAN system as designed in the Momostenango pilot was scaled up to seven other municipalities of the department. This is a significant achievement, although there could be a risk if only the first component (information management and analysis) is replicated without sufficient support to the other two components (capacity building, and demand creation and use of information). The Momostenango pilot project's achievements may have been due to the integrated approach of the three components.
- It is important to strengthen the use of existing information in the FNS multisectoral planning exercise to better monitor budget allocation and implementation and assess progress. It was noted that the potential to publish routine data makes it easier for institutions participating in the GCNN to act in a timely manner at the local level. In a global context in which data on how budgets are allocated sub-nationally is extraordinarily scarce, the example of SIMSAN in Momostenango - unique in Guatemala - demonstrates the simple improvements that can be made in this area. This should be an opportunity to promote the platform's implementation in other municipalities.
- It is crucial to document the whole process and key aspects of the technical assistance in establishing the NIPN, and to facilitate the exchange of experiences, in order to enhance peer learning. It is also important to document the costs of the pilot, including equipment (to mobilise financial resources). Furthermore, alternatives should be explored and proposed regarding the use of existing municipal human, financial and physical resources to reduce the platform's implementation costs and make implementation more feasible.
- Given that each municipality is different, scaling up the platform will require municipalities to be classified according to the number and characteristics of the actors (mapping of actors) and the approach adapted to each context. It will be important to agree a planning process with SESAN to establish the institutional framework, and to involve governors, the National Association of Municipalities (ANAM), and the Executive Coordination Secretariat of the Presidency (SCEP).
- It is necessary to demonstrate the added value of investing in real technical data to inform investments in order to generate political will and create awareness and ownership by political authorities at the decentralised level. Local governments must take part in using the platform, by identifying key questions and relevant and timely information to leverage governance processes and decision-making in FNS. Similarly, it is important to analyse, understand and build on the political context in order to set the information system's objectives.

¹⁷ Efforts are even being made to influence the budget readjustment exercise of the national programming for 2022 (interview with the Governor of the Department of Totonicapán).

- It is advisable to advocate and promote the platform's use at the levels of both municipality and department commissions, including allocating a share of the budget to support ongoing maintenance of the system. Given that the municipal budget is small, sectoral institutions involved should also make a financial contribution. The authorities could be assisted to understand the platform's added value through, for instance, training courses on how to effectively include the platform in the budget structure. Another option might be to establish a departmental regulation to allocate funds to municipalities that adopt/scale up a municipal platform. or scale up for public investment that applies to municipalities when municipal platforms are scaled up.
- Tools and processes should be promoted to focus capacity development efforts at the institutional level (DIMUSAN) to enable them to follow up and sustain the process in the event of potential political changes.
- Different ICT options should be used to respond in a timely manner to requests from those on the ground. For example, during the pandemic, project staff used a WhatsApp group and held regular workshops and virtual meetings (although these should not replace the necessary field visits).
- FNS governance needs to be actively monitored at the municipal level by reviewing the index throughout the year and adjusting processes as needed in a given context.
- It is recommended to seize opportunities to build alliances and synergies with relevant initiatives at the decentralised level (e.g. the Social Household Registry's¹⁸ pilot plan that will be implemented in four Departments, including Toticapán).

At the global level

- It would be wise to form a strategic alliance with the national institution responsible for FNS coordination (as in the case of CATIE with SESAN) and establish the institutional arrangements needed to open doors and allow access to data.
- A specialised and recognised multidisciplinary team would be necessary to facilitate the process and provide constant support by accompanying the institutions and authorities at the decentralised level.
- It would be important to exchange lessons learned and good practices regarding the platforms' implementation in other countries.
- The existence of a FNS policy and legal framework is a key success factor for informing decision-making about information systems.
- It is essential to value the importance of coaching in strengthening functional or 'soft' skills (leadership, communication, teamwork, project management and execution) in addition to technical competencies.
- A theory of change for capacity building should be developed and tailored to each decentralised government.
- In countries where the public services are more devolved to local and regional levels than in Guatemala, municipal platforms could be used to rank municipalities based on nutrition-related indicators as an incentive to improve the local situation.

¹⁸ An initiative implemented by UNDP under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), the SHR pilot will provide instruments and mechanisms to identify and select individuals and households eligible for the different social benefits and programmes.

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