

Nutrition for Growth Summit | Tokyo 2021



Shaping commitments to improve nutrition data and accountability in support of food, health and prosperity for all

Recommendations from the
Nutrition Data Partners Group

August 2021

This document was developed by the Nutrition Data Partners Group,¹ a group of global development partners committed to strengthening nutrition-relevant data who have met regularly since 2018. Our aim is to encourage and support countries in formulating data-specific commitments for the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021.

Background

In 2014 the Global Nutrition Report (GNR) called for a “nutrition data revolution” to accelerate progress towards the World Health Assembly global nutrition targets and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2018 GNR reinforced the call for investment in more and better data to inform actions across sectors and hold actors accountable to nutrition commitments.

Stronger nutrition data and information systems require strategic investment, in both sectoral and multisectoral systems and capacities. However, to date, few countries or development partners have prioritized such investments.

- A 2019 review of Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement national nutrition plans² found that only 33 of 58 countries had costed plans with sections on data, monitoring and evaluation. Where costs could be assessed, very limited funds – only 0.1% to 12.8% of the total budget – had been allocated for data, monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Donor disbursements between 2017 and 2019 fell short of a 5% benchmark for total funding for nutrition data and information systems – and disbursements appear to be plateauing, if not decreasing.³

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of resilient national information systems. These are key to produce timely and reliable information on the scope of nutrition problems and the efforts underway to address them.⁴ At the same time, the pandemic has also contributed to fiscal strain for both donors and countries.

Strategic investments in data can help us mitigate the effects of the pandemic on maternal child nutrition and drive progress towards achievement of the SDGs, including an end to malnutrition in all its forms. We must prioritize high-quality, timely data to inform programme and policy design, mobilize resources, monitor performance, track progress and course-correct, and hold stakeholders accountable for commitments, including those made at the N4G 2021 Summit.

Nutrition for Growth and nutrition data

The N4G Summit⁵ is the global flagship moment for governments and other stakeholders to showcase strong financial and non-financial commitments aimed at ending malnutrition in all its forms. Focus pillars for commitments for the 2021 Summit are universal health coverage, food systems transformation for nutrition and addressing malnutrition in fragile contexts.

1 The members of the Nutrition Data Partners Group are: Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, UNICEF, World Health Organization, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, United States Agency for International Development, United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH, Global Nutrition Report, Johns Hopkins University, JSI Research and Training Institute, CGIAR, NIPN, International Food Policy Research Institute.

2 <https://gatesopenresearch.org/articles/4-60>

3 <https://datadent.org/2021/07/26/financing-nutrition-data-and-information-systems-three-recommendations-for-donors-to-consider-ahead-of-n4g/>

4 <https://www.standingtogetherfornutrition.org/>

5 <https://nutritionforgrowth.org/>

All commitments will be recorded in the Global N4G Compact. Commitments will be also shared publicly and annually tracked by the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).⁶

In 2019, a Financing for Nutrition Thematic Working Group advised N4G stakeholders on potential commitments around strengthening nutrition data and information systems. To this end, the Working Group recommended a benchmark of **allocating 4–6% of total nutrition investments towards nutrition data and information systems**. In addition, it was recommended that a standard section on *Data, Measurement and Evaluation* be included within all nutrition-related planning documents and that more granular resource tracking data be collected for both domestic and donor nutrition investments.

The Nutrition Data Partners Group echoes the Working Group’s call for increased investment in nutrition data and information systems.

Call to action

All countries and development partners should make specific commitments to strengthen the collection and use of nutrition data that reflect the following principles:

- Allocate at least 5% of total nutrition funding to strengthening data and information systems
- Attend to all elements of the nutrition data value chain,⁷ ranging from prioritizing what data to collect to fostering a culture of data use
- Facilitate linkages between and access to nutrition and food systems data by all actors across sectors
- Ensure a robust internal system to track N4G commitments

Sample commitments to adapt to the country context

Budgeting and Financing

- Allocate adequate funding (4–6 %) for data and information system strengthening in all future nutrition investments [*Donors, Development partners*]
- Mobilize domestic financing, with budget line items specific to nutrition data and information systems [*Governments*]

Strengthen national nutrition data systems, data use, and capacity

- Review national nutrition data systems and develop a budgeted plan to identify gaps and strengthen all aspects including surveys, routine monitoring and surveillance, data quality, data use, evaluation and human resource capacity. Harmonize nutrition data and information systems across sectors and partners to reflect standards and core indicators that are aligned with national nutrition data plans and strategies and develop a national multi-sector nutrition data strategy [*Governments*]
- Make long-term investments in human and technical resources for data collection, analysis and dissemination of nutrition data [*Governments, Donors, Development partners*]

⁶ <https://globalnutritionreport.org/>

⁷ https://www.anhacademy.org/sites/default/files/SightandLifeMagazine_2019_Data_in_Nutrition_StrengtheningtheDataValueChain-AccountabilityandAction.pdf

- Invest in information platforms that facilitate cross-sector analysis of data that support nutrition policy, programme and investment decisions by actors at national and sub-national levels *[Governments, Donors, Development partners]*
- Use available data in the development of policies and strategic plans and in reporting on nutrition programme performance *[Governments, Donors]*

Planning and coordination

- Strategic plans and policies for nutrition will specifically address planning, financing and coordination of nutrition data and multisectoral information systems at national and subnational levels *[Governments]*
- Nutrition coordination bodies will include a specific mandate around ensuring collection, curation and analysis of nutrition data, as well as data translation and dissemination. Convene platforms that improve coordination of and information sharing by partners working towards strengthening nutrition data and information systems *[Governments, Donors, Development partners]*
- Adopt data policies that ensure data are publicly available; annotated with microdata; easily shared across different sectors, partners and systems; and comparable across time, source and administrative level *[Governments, Donors, Development partners]*

Refer to additional examples of commitments in the *Call to Action, Investing in the Data Value Chain for Nutrition in West Africa, West Africa Data Forum*⁸

Examples of commitments made by countries in previous N4G Summits:

- Finance and conduct annual surveys, including monitoring of the implementation of the 'First 1,000 Days' programmes to refocus efforts and evaluate impact. *Government of Guatemala (2013 N4G Summit)*
- Monitor the implementation of the National Nutrition Plan at national and subnational level, and use data and results for decision-making. *Government of Guatemala (2013 N4G Summit)*
- Put in place an integrated nutrition surveillance system that takes stock of the nutrition status at community, district and national levels. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for the implementation of the UNAP (Uganda Nutrition Action Plan). *Government of Uganda (2013 N4G Summit)*

For further information, please contact:

Debora Di Dio Debora (DiDio@scalingupnutrition.org) and Chika Hayashi (chayashi@unicef.org)

⁸ Investing in the Data Value Chain for Nutrition in West Africa (transformnutrition.org)

