

NUTRITION QUICK TIPS SERIES



MULTISECTORAL NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

Multisectoral nutrition governance: no single government, organisation or intervention alone can end malnutrition, and it is only through working together on all fronts at all levels of governance that the 2030 agenda can be achieved. The principal strategies to improve governance are (i) increased awareness and consensus of stakeholders, (ii) strengthened national policies and programmes, (iii) increased human and institutional capacity, and (iv) increased effectiveness and accountability.

Addressing malnutrition requires a strong focus on governance, ensuring coordinated actions by many stakeholders and at different levels of government. The 1990 UNICEF conceptual framework for maternal and child nutrition opened the dialogue on the need to complement nutrition-specific interventions (principally direct health services) with nutrition-sensitive interventions directed to address underlying factors that impact the quality and quantity of food, health services, hygiene, childcare and feeding practices¹. The first Lancet series on maternal and child nutrition published in 2008 stressed that focusing just on nutrition-specific interventions achieved limited results². The root causes lie deeper, so to tackle malnutrition in the long term, the enabling environment is key – involving knowledge and evidence, politics and governance, and capacity and resources³.

The latest Lancet series builds upon findings from the previous 2008 and 2013⁴ series and reinforces the need for multisectoral actions to accelerate progress⁵. A key priority is to develop policies and financing at global and national level to address the broader social determinants of nutrition inequities⁶. With increasing global attention to climate change and environmental protection⁷, the strategic importance of nutrition governance being inclusive of key stakeholders is also critical since markets, commercialisation, trade and urban consumers all play a pivotal role in modern day food systems and nutrition⁸.

1 Refer to the Introductory Quick Tips and Quick Tips on Education, Health, Social Protection, Agriculture, WASH and Gender.

2 [Lancet Series on maternal and child undernutrition, 2008](#).

3 Gillespie, S., Haddad, L., et al. 2013. [The politics of reducing malnutrition: building commitment and accelerating progress](#). Lancet Series on Maternal & Child Nutrition.

4 [Lancet series on maternal and child undernutrition, 2013](#).

5 Victora, C.G. et al. 2021. [Revisiting maternal and child undernutrition in low-income and middle-income countries: variable progress towards an unfinished agenda](#). Lancet series: maternal and child undernutrition progress. 397: 10282: 1388–1399.

6 Refer to Quick Tips: Equality, equity and nutrition.

7 [Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems](#), EAT-Lancet Commission, 2020.

8 [HLPE Report No. 12](#): Nutrition and Food Systems (September 2017) and the CFS [Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#), March 2021.

Global mechanisms

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was established in 1974 as both an international and an intergovernmental platform to ensure food security and nutrition for all. The CFS develops and endorses policy recommendations and guidance drawn from scientific and evidence-based reports produced by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) or other technical sources. The CFS has published the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, which is a universal policy tool for use by governments and specialised institutions.⁹

The **Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement** was launched in 2010 and represents a global effort to eliminate all forms of malnutrition in line with both the World Health Assembly (WHA) targets of 2025¹⁰ and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 by 2030. The movement is unique in bringing together governments¹¹, civil society, the United Nations, donors, businesses and scientists, to empower players across multiple sectors to put in place effective systems and to increase investments to improve nutrition outcomes. The new SUN strategy 3.0 2020-2025 places particular emphasis on 'country leadership and government responsibilities'. The European Union (EU) Commissioner for International Partnerships is a member of the SUN Lead Group and several EU delegations (as well as EU Member States) are now SUN donor convenors in their respective countries.



The EU

The EU has actively engaged with and contributed to these global mechanisms. In 2013 the EU committed to support partner countries in reducing stunting by at least 7 million¹² by 2025 as set out in the Commission's ambitious **Action Plan on Nutrition (APN)**. The Commission reports on this commitment and its financial pledge annually to the European Council¹³. These commitments embody the **first strategic priority of the APN**, which is *to strengthen political commitment for nutrition*. The APN recognises that 'leadership, good governance and national ownership are central in tackling undernutrition' and stresses

Nutrition for Growth (N4G) is a global pledging movement (often tied to the Olympic Games) to drive greater action towards ending malnutrition and ensuring everyone reaches their full potential. The first summit was held in London in 2013 where 100 stakeholders endorsed the global N4G compact and pledged more than USD 23 billion for nutrition (including the EUR 3.5 billion pledge from the European Commission 2014-2020). In the 2021 N4G Summit in Tokyo, the European Commission announced a new pledge of EUR 2.5 billion for 2021-2024 to reduce all forms of malnutrition.

The **Global Nutrition Report** was established after the first N4G summit as an accountability mechanism to track progress against global nutrition targets and the commitments made to reach them. It also provides an annual independent assessment of the state of global nutrition based upon best available data and analysis.

The Global Network Against Food Crises was launched by the EU, UN Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit to respond to calls for new approaches to tackle protracted crises and recurrent disasters, reduce vulnerability and manage risk by bridging the divide between development and humanitarian partners. A Global Report on Food Crises is generated annually, now incorporating analysis on nutrition and diet.

the following dimensions: (i) nutrition should be prominent in national development priorities; (ii) sound governance approaches should be applied including multisectoral nutrition coordination and planning; (iii) clear nutrition outcomes should be defined at national level; and (iv) aid effectiveness for nutrition is enhanced through stronger donor coordination and alignment. In all its efforts to promote and strengthen nutrition governance at different levels, the EU works in close consultation and collaboration with EU Member States (which is implicit in the four strategies set out below).

9 CFS [Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#).

10 WHA global nutrition targets 2025 are: 40% reduction in number of children under 5 stunted; 50% reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age; 30% reduction in low birth weight; no increase in child overweight; 50% increase in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding 0-6 months; and reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%.

11 Currently, 63 governments and four Indian states are members of the SUN movement.

12 Corresponding to 10% of the World Health Assembly target for 2025.

13 During the 2014-2020 programming cycle, 42 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America prioritised nutrition in their National Indicative Programmes drawn up with EU delegations – these countries have been the principal contributors to the annual progress reports.

Strategies for multisectoral nutrition governance at country level



Supporting coordination mechanisms and platforms for nutrition, which include all relevant sectors and stakeholders at different levels

- Support efforts to build a consistent and consensual approach based upon a common causal analysis of the principal factors driving all forms of malnutrition.
- Encourage and support the engagement of multiple stakeholders (government, donors, UN system, civil society, businesses, academic and research institutions) in the dialogue on nutrition.
- Encourage and support the engagement of multiple sectors (agriculture, food systems, trade, education, health, gender, social protection, water, sanitation and hygiene)¹⁴ in the dialogue on nutrition through establishment of nutrition focal points and sectoral working groups on nutrition.
- Support inclusive engagement and coordination of relevant stakeholders and sectors at all levels including sub-national (typically district and provincial) as well as national and regional (adopting a strong territorial approach¹⁵).
- Foster and participate in donor coordination mechanisms that secure alignment behind government priorities (notably in countries that are members of the SUN movement) and support and/or assume responsibility for the SUN donor convenor role (in consultation with EU Member States).
- Promote and support high-level commitment to gender, women's empowerment and nutrition, for example through gender-sensitive national nutrition/food policies and plans.
- Promote and support the establishment of legal/regulatory frameworks across relevant sectors which favour improved nutritional status of women, adolescents and children.



Strengthening the capacity of key players and support systems that enable more effective multisectoral nutrition governance

- Support and promote strategic leadership and advocacy for nutrition at an executive, decision-making level across principal stakeholders in national governments¹⁶ or regional authorities/bodies¹⁷.
- Encourage and support appropriate 'champions of nutrition' that offer visibility and a voice to nutrition that generates greater political and public attention and awareness on nutrition (this can be as important at a devolved level as at national level).
- Support the assessment, identification and development of institutional capacities¹⁸ of key government ministries/ departments and development partners.
- Support the assessment, identification and development of key functional capacities of both humanitarian and development services relating to nutrition within government at all levels (including technical, planning and monitoring skills, but also soft skills to improve networking, partnering and convening).
- Support the raising of awareness and knowledge of nutrition issues and strategies to address malnutrition across all stakeholders contributing to better nutrition governance (information portals, guidelines, tools and e-learning).

¹⁴ Refer to the Quick Tips on Education, Health, Social protection, Agriculture, WASH and Gender.

¹⁵ Nutrition platforms at a decentralised level are critical to reach and engage with communities and to better understand key drivers of malnutrition.

¹⁶ Often this might be best positioned within a Presidential (or Vice-Presidential) office, the Office of the Prime Minister or the Ministry of Planning rather than a sector (or line) ministry.

¹⁷ A good example is the [African Leaders for Nutrition \(ALN\) initiative](#).

¹⁸ In particular, the importance of integrating nutrition into planning, policy and monitoring systems of relevant line ministries.



Promoting more systematic multisectoral planning, strategies and policies for nutrition

- Support research initiatives that contribute to a better understanding of the situation analysis of nutrition and identify strategic gaps that should be addressed through humanitarian and/or development planning with particular reference to health and food systems.
- Support the development of multisectoral nutrition policies that are based upon a comprehensive situation analysis and consultation across government, development partners, civil society and the private sector and represent the collective responsibility of all relevant line ministries at national level.
- Support the development of nutrition action plans at both national and decentralised levels which operationalise the policy objectives and integrate the activities of multiple line ministries and departments.
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration between different sector interventions at field level to reach the same communities and households with multiple actions.
- Support the mapping of existing resources to nutrition across sectors (including government, UN agencies, philanthropic organisations and civil society) and identify strategies that can build upon or complement existing mechanisms (including budget support).
- Enter into dialogue on nutrition policy with governments at the highest level and engage with focal points on nutrition in all relevant ministries to incorporate nutrition objectives and results in policies and strategies of each relevant sector.
- Scaling up of interventions where evidence demonstrates the effectiveness and impact of the approach in particular contexts.
- Support effective communication systems to disseminate knowledge and good practice on both nutrition-specific and -sensitive approaches.



Ensuring aid effectiveness and accountability for nutrition

- Ensure that aid effectiveness for nutrition is enhanced at national, regional and global levels to make the best use of available resources.
- Work collectively as EU and Member States to develop a common strategy and approach in support of national and regional initiatives for nutrition¹⁹.
- Encourage and support clear political commitments to nutrition through broader national and regional development plans²⁰, strategies and policies with specific budgetary implications.
- Support efforts to effectively cost multisectoral nutrition action plans at national level and support the replication of these operational plans at decentralised levels with common results frameworks.
- Ensure the integration of relevant nutrition indicators into broader national development plans, strategies and policies with SMART targets.
- Encourage the application of monitoring and evaluation systems (MEAL²¹) and resource tracking for nutrition to be implemented and reported against national/local targets and financial commitments.
- Support the effective operation and management of information systems on nutrition, diets and food systems.
- Improve the identification, reporting and monitoring of donor nutrition actions in overseas development assistance. The European Commission reports on the OECD-DAC nutrition policy marker (NPM)²².

¹⁹ Good models of EU collaboration on nutrition have been developed in Ethiopia and Lao PDR.

²⁰ Typically, national development plans that countries review every 3-5 years, but also regional development plans (e.g. the African Union's plan to Build Resilience in Nutrition on the African Continent, drafted in 2021).

²¹ <https://scalingupnutrition.org/progress-impact/monitoring-evaluation-accountability-and-learning-meal/>

²² Refer to the Quick Tips Nutrition Policy Marker reporting to the OECD DAC.



Further information and support

- [Committee on World Food Security](#) website: including the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and HLPE reports.
- The [Scaling Up Nutrition](#) movement website: including the link to the new SUN strategy 3.0 2020-2025.
- [Nutrition for Growth](#) website.
- [Global Nutrition Report](#) website.
- [Global Network Against Food Crises](#) page on the FAO website.
- [EU Action Plan on Nutrition](#): including links to the first five progress reports on the APN.

Relevant EU-funded actions that represent case studies for multisectoral nutrition governance.

Budget Support programmes

- [Contrat de Réforme Sectorielle Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle et Développement Agricole Durable](#), Niger.
- [Programme d'appui à la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle, à l'Agriculture Durable et à la Résilience](#), Burkina Faso.
- [Support to the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan of the Government of Nepal](#) (second Phase: 2018-2022).
- Support to the Lao PDR National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action.

Other EU-funded interventions

- The [SUCHANA](#) Project, Bangladesh.
- PROMOVE-Nutrição, Mozambique.
- Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU).
- [Support to the sustainable commercialisation](#) of Zambia's smallholder farmers.
- Resilience building and food and nutrition security programme, Zimbabwe.

The actions without a link can be studied further in the annex of [6th Progress Report on the Action Plan on Nutrition](#) or [Projects That Work for Improved Nutrition](#).

The new OECD-DAC policy marker on nutrition was approved by the OECD-DAC for official development assistance reporting in 2019 with the support of the Commission and Member States. According to this marker, 'a project should be identified as nutrition related when it is intended to address the immediate or underlying determinants of malnutrition'. An [OECD-DAC Nutrition Policy Marker Handbook](#) is available.

The EU is a global leader in promoting gender equality as a key political objective of its external action and common foreign policy, aimed at accelerating progress towards the SDGs. By 2025, 85% of new EU actions should contribute to achieving the objective of gender equality and women's empowerment, with more actions including it as a main objective. Please refer to the Quick Tips on Nutrition, gender equality and women's empowerment.

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