



PATH/Evelyn Hockstein

LINKING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Considerations for developing multisectoral nutrition plans

Addressing malnutrition during crises requires humanitarian and development workstreams to act together to prevent deterioration of the nutrition situation whilst simultaneously strengthening countries capacity to address the underlying causes of malnutrition in an effective and sustainable manner.

Under this context, humanitarian actions are specified as those that are designed to relieve suffering in the short term or during crises and emergencies. Development actions, on the other hand, are designed to ameliorate long-term, systematic issues, such as poverty, and advance economic, political, social and environmental growth.

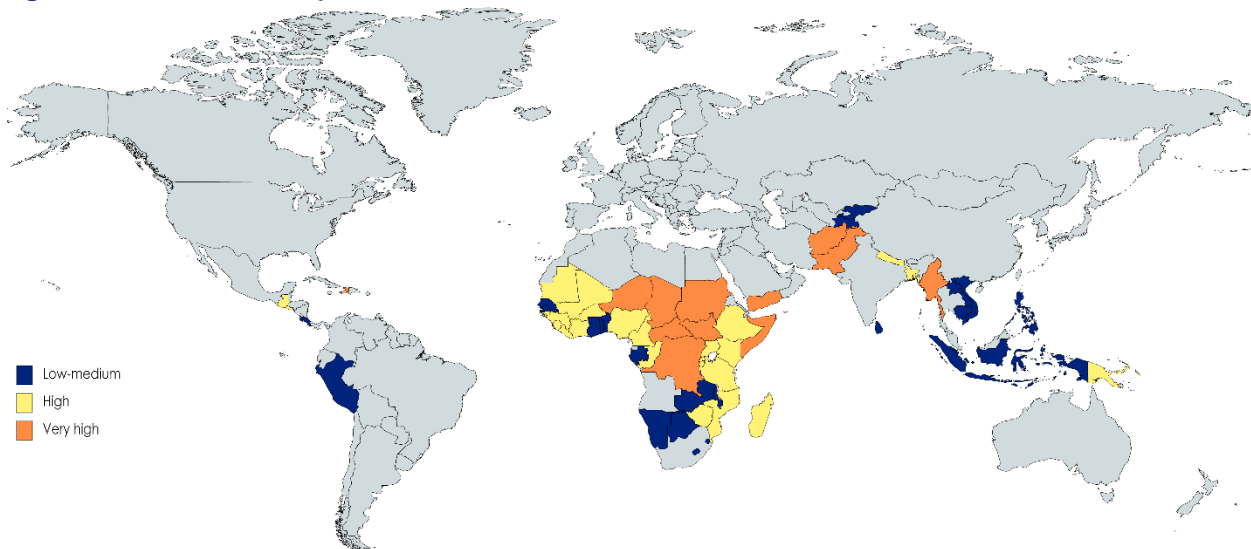
This brief explores ways to build better linkages between humanitarian and development nutrition actions in crisis-affected countries. It briefly describes some of the divisions that exist between humanitarian and development nutrition programming and provides recommended actions that country stakeholders can take to better coordinate and align efforts to combat malnutrition—specifically focused on opportunities to bridge the divide during the country-led process of developing multisectoral nutrition plans (MSNP). Global stakeholders working to support countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence in addressing malnutrition may also find this brief helpful. These recommended actions are informed by [Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus \(MQSUN+\)](#) experience supporting the multisectoral nutrition planning process in fragile or conflict-affected countries participating in the SUN Movement ([Figure 1](#)).

Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus

Following on the success of Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition (MQSUN) (2012–2016), the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded MQSUN+ (2016–2020) provides technical assistance to FCDO, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) countries and the SUN Movement Secretariat to catalyse multisectoral country efforts to scale up nutrition impact, maximise the quality and effectiveness of nutrition-related programmes, increase innovation in nutrition, support evidence generation and knowledge uptake and develop technical capacity. MQSUN+ is a consortium of five expert organisations: PATH (lead), Aga Khan University, DAI Global Health, Development Initiatives and NutritionWorks.

MQSUN+

Figure 1. SUN countries by classification of humanitarian risk.



Adapted from: [SUN member countries with high humanitarian risk levels, 2018](#).

Background

Malnutrition in crisis

The need for the humanitarian and development communities to better work together is increasingly urgent as humanitarian crises around the world have become more complex and protracted. Over the past decade, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has nearly doubled.¹ The World Bank estimates that around two billion people are living in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence.² The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing humanitarian crises.³

Sociopolitical, economic and environmental crises are increasingly recognised as being key drivers of poor health and nutrition.² The vast majority of chronically food-insecure and malnourished people in the world live in conflict-affected countries. Seventy-five percent of stunted children under the age of five (122 million children) live in countries affected by conflict.⁴ Whilst progress has been made in reducing undernutrition globally, stunting prevalence in a number of conflict-affected countries has increased⁵ and the prevalence of acute malnutrition (wasting) remains persistently high.⁶

A global vision to align humanitarian and development actions

There is global commitment for humanitarian and development stakeholders, including governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGO), United Nations (UN) agencies and private sector actors, to find ways to better work together in serving populations affected by crisis and fragility. In 2016, global stakeholders at the World Humanitarian Summit signed the Grand Bargain calling for stronger links between humanitarian and development programming.⁷ Subsequently, the United Nations Office for Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs developed the *New Ways of Working*—a framework for more joint humanitarian and development approaches which aim to: support collective outcomes; leverage different actors' comparative advantages and work within multiyear timeframes.⁸ Meanwhile, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

offers a framework for humanitarian and development actors to contribute to a common vision, which includes ending hunger and malnutrition by 2030.^{8,9}

The humanitarian-development divide in nutrition policy and programming

Long-standing divisions between the humanitarian and development workstreams hamper collaboration and progress on addressing malnutrition in crisis. One significant divide is that actors in the two workstreams have focused on addressing different forms of malnutrition—with distinct solutions—rather than delivering comprehensive approaches.

The division is evident in the different sets of policies, programmes, research and funding for stunting and wasting.¹⁰ On one side, the humanitarian workstream has tended to more explicitly focus on addressing wasting (acute malnutrition), with significantly less recognition of the impact of coordinated multisectoral action on all forms of undernutrition. This is in contrast to the more prevention-focused, multisectoral approaches amongst development actors in recent years.¹

In nutrition and other critical programmes, linkages between humanitarian and development planning processes and cycles have often been weak or absent. For example, humanitarian planning cycles are typically annual and do not match up with longer-term development planning and monitoring and evaluation processes or financial frameworks.¹¹

INTERAGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE—CLUSTER APPROACH

The cluster approach was introduced as part of the 2005 UN reforms in an effort to address perceived inefficiencies in humanitarian response coordination. Clusters are groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN, covering all areas of humanitarian action. They operate at both a global level—to maintain preparedness and technical capacity—and at the country level—to manage coordination and maximise effectiveness of actors on the ground.

Led by the humanitarian coordinator in support of the host government, clusters are represented by the country head of the cluster lead agency or relevant government ministry. National cluster coordinators come together through the inter-cluster coordination mechanism. A cluster lead organisation is designated in a given area—such as education, agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene or nutrition—and organises meetings at national and/or subnational levels.

Each cluster contributes to the formulation of a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Needs are assessed using a Humanitarian Needs Overview or other joint needs assessment and analysis processes. The HRP provides estimates of the level of humanitarian need across sectors and the associated level of funding needed for the response, i.e. the “Humanitarian Response Appeal.” An HRP usually covers one year but can also, in some cases, be multiyear.

Source: [Cluster Approach Evaluation 2 Synthesis Report, 2010](#).

In humanitarian settings, clusters have clear responsibilities for coordinating emergency response efforts.¹² Although it is widely agreed that the cluster system has improved the efficiency of humanitarian responses globally, it has sometimes faced criticism for not adequately linking with, building on or supporting existing government coordination and response mechanisms.¹ Governments, in turn, often lack the necessary national reference tools and funding and coordination mechanisms to help national- and district-level officials to plan, budget or operationalise a holistic nutrition response within emergency contexts.^{13,14}

Urgent action needed to bridge the divide for nutrition

Whilst it is vital that humanitarian efforts focus on immediate life-saving activities and maintain neutrality and independence, identifying opportunities for increasing complementary actions and supporting state institutions and processes is equally necessary. This is especially true in the context of recurrent and protracted crises where development and humanitarian assistance is often delivered together.¹⁴

A growing evidence base supports the need to move towards a more comprehensive approach to malnutrition. Recent efforts to better understand the interaction between wasting and stunting have found a strong association between the two forms of malnutrition and that concurrent wasting and stunting worsens mortality risk.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the increasing use of collective outcomes and multiyear timeframes within humanitarian planning provides an opportunity to strengthen linkages with longer-term, government-led multisectoral nutrition planning and ensure mutual accountability for addressing all forms of undernutrition.

Whilst distinctions between the humanitarian and development workstreams will remain, there is broad agreement amongst global stakeholders on the critical need to work more closely together during crises.¹ The SUN Movement has called for urgent action:

“Breaking the silos of independent operation between development and humanitarian efforts is of urgency and importance if a world without malnutrition is to be realised by 2030.”¹⁶



PATH/Gabe Biencycki

Leveraging multisectoral nutrition planning to bridge the humanitarian-development divide

Multisectoral nutrition planning provides a key opportunity to situate and strengthen humanitarian and development actions to improve nutrition. As part of this process, SUN countries collaborate across sectors and stakeholders to develop national MSNPs. These plans are endorsed at the highest level and guide collective country efforts to improve nutrition.¹⁷ MQSUN+, as a key technical assistance provider to the SUN Movement, has supported countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence to catalyse their multisectoral nutrition planning efforts. This brief describes key steps in the development of an MSNP and provides a set of *strategic actions that can be applied during this process to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development stakeholders*. The key steps to develop an MSNP include:

- 1 Assessing the country context and engaging key stakeholders.
- 2 Developing a multisectoral nutrition plan.
- 3 Operationalising the multisectoral nutrition plan.

Step 1. Assessing the country context and engaging stakeholders for nutrition

The first step in multisectoral nutrition planning is twofold: (1) assessing the current country context for nutrition (primarily through a contextual analysis) and (2) orienting the appropriate stakeholders to the process. Conducting a contextual analysis includes a comprehensive analysis of the **nutrition situation** (the magnitude and nature of malnutrition and its underlying causes in the country) in addition to understanding the **landscape for nutrition-relevant policies** and plans and/or the **stakeholders** engaged in them.

Engaging a broad group of stakeholders as early as possible in the process can ensure buy-in and ownership across sectors and stakeholder groups, as well as to ensure that an appropriate and viable plan is developed that is feasible to implement and which a variety of actors are committed to implement with a shared vision of addressing the key identified issues to lead to desired nutrition impact.

During this first step in developing an MSNP, countries may consider the following actions to strengthen alignment between humanitarian and development efforts.

Engage with and gather input from a wide range of stakeholders from the outset

Including all relevant humanitarian and development stakeholders early in the planning process sets the stage for stronger alignment throughout subsequent stages of the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation process. Where there is some degree of federal or regional decentralisation, it is vital to ensure strong engagement early on with relevant authorities and ministerial staff at a subnational level. In humanitarian settings, it is important to recognise and support the leadership of local actors, in addition to ensuring that vulnerable groups, like women, adolescents, disabled and elderly people, have a voice in decision-making.

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, non-state actors are likely to play a significant role in providing and funding nutrition-related services. Where appropriate, engaging donors, civil society, private sector and community partner organisations at this early stage of the process—and requesting any available nutrition information and planning documents to inform the contextual analysis—can strengthen engagement throughout the subsequent stages of plan development. Gathering input and planning documents from both development and humanitarian stakeholders will ensure a more robust contextual/situational analysis and a more comprehensive summary of current actions that are being taken to address malnutrition—which will support better alignment of humanitarian and development efforts in the MSNP.

These initial steps may be a more informal canvassing of humanitarian and development stakeholders' opinions on how they envision their role in supporting the planning process or where they feel existing plans or programmes could be incorporated in the MSNP. This range of actors should also be invited to subsequent workshops, such as those for raising awareness on the importance of nutrition, to solicit buy-in for the contextual analysis, and to inform and validate the roadmap for developing the MSNP.

Identify and use available data to inform joint analysis and decision-making

An integral part of assessing the current context for nutrition is to understand what nutrition data is available to inform the multisectoral planning process. A first step is to gather available data during the contextual analysis. Accurate data, including nutrition outcome and budget data, are needed to identify potential causes and determinants of malnutrition, review progress on planned activities and appropriately prioritise funding and mobilise resources. In fragile and crisis-affected countries, this should include analysing nutrition data from both development actors—such as those from government information systems or donor programmes—and humanitarian actors—such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs or the cluster system—to get a thorough understanding of the status of both acute and chronic malnutrition

and related causes as well as what is currently being done to address both across the divide. Subsequent activities and plans should be based on what is feasible considering the available data.

Importantly, this data should be used during the planning process to determine where needs are the greatest and to use that information to plan an appropriate and feasible long-term response. This is particularly important in countries that experience fragility or conflict in specific districts or localities.



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For example, stakeholders in Sudan used data to make a case for the need to expand delivery of interventions addressing acute malnutrition outside of the country's crisis zone. Data revealed that relatively stable areas of the country have higher cases of children with acute malnutrition than in Darfur, which is a crisis zone that receives a lot of humanitarian aid. Although Darfur has a higher prevalence of acute malnutrition, other areas of the country have a higher number of children suffering from acute malnutrition. In this case, data was critical to help country stakeholders understand the need to expand acute malnutrition interventions outside of areas targeted by the humanitarian response.

Map existing policies and programmes across humanitarian and development workstreams

In fragile or conflict-affected countries, fragmentation in planning across government and humanitarian organisations is common, which can make developing a clear picture of existing nutrition interventions and programmes challenging. An integral part of this initial stage of the planning process is understanding what nutrition interventions are currently being implemented and/or planned by both state and non-state actors—including both development and humanitarian actions.

Nutrition programmes can be mapped using existing planning and policy documents from government ministries, nongovernmental organisations, UN agencies and the cluster system. For example, national cluster systems typically have a planning matrix that includes thematic and detailed activities, objectives and projected costs.

Similarly, ministerial planning documents with detailed activities, objectives and costs will typically be available, dependent on the country context.

The key purposes of appropriately mapping both humanitarian and development policies and programmes are to: 1) understand the current landscape for nutrition actions; 2) identify where there are areas of synergy that can be strengthened and duplication that can be eliminated; and 3) reveal gaps in interventions that can be incorporated into the MSNP. It is also important to document when and where there is existing coordination and collaboration taking place between relevant actors to build upon them in the plan.

A lack of capacity, transparency, or the need to respect humanitarian principles of impartiality or state sovereignty may limit the space for integrated action in some cases. It is important to identify potential limitations or reservations at an early stage of the planning process. Steps to increase transparency and trust between parties can then be agreed upon and incorporated into subsequent planned activities, where appropriate.

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING THE COUNTRY CONTEXT AND ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS:

Countries may wish to consider the following questions when gathering information about current nutrition programmes and opportunities to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development efforts to improve nutrition:

- > What are the main humanitarian structures and who are the actors and donors? How are they linked to long-term development during emergencies (pre- and post-emergency)?
- > How involved are humanitarian actors in the multisectoral nutrition planning process?
- > Do any existing health/nutrition policies link humanitarian and development actions? Which policies? What can be learned from them?
- > What are the existing coordination and decision-making mechanisms for both humanitarian and development actors? How can they be linked?
- > What are the humanitarian clusters that play a role in addressing nutrition (including nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive clusters)? How do the clusters coordinate and link with each other? Are these humanitarian clusters permanent or transitional? Do they have a distinct coordination structure at times of pre or post crisis (e.g. sector coordination)? Are they linked or do they arise out of a sector coordination?
- > Do the SUN Focal Point and relevant humanitarian clusters work together? If so, how, and what are the challenges?
- > What is the involvement of the government in the humanitarian response?
- > Does the country have any health management information system or current survey data for nutrition? How do humanitarian and development actors use the data for decision-making? Do they come together for sharing the data and for joint decision-making?
- > What does financing/resource mobilisation look like for humanitarian and development efforts?
- > How can governments, donors and civil society organisations coordinate efforts to support greater government responsiveness and accountability around nutrition programming?

COORDINATING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS IN YEMEN

[Yemen's National Nutrition Multisectoral Action Plan](#) (NNMSAP) was first developed and endorsed in 2014. However, with the resurgent conflict in 2015 and the pervasive humanitarian crisis, factors that contribute to malnutrition have deteriorated considerably, making the nutrition situation in Yemen highly fluid. With support from MQSUN+, the government of Yemen—led by the SUN National Steering Committee, supported by the SUN Movement Secretariat and hosted at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation—undertook revisions to the NNMSAP to respond to the ongoing widespread humanitarian crisis in the country.

The work included updated situational, trajectory and contextual analyses, and recommendations on key interventions and ways forward in light of the conflict and emergency situation. The NNMSAP was updated with high-priority interventions and resource needs using results of new surveys and data sources, such as the Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment, Integrated Phase Classification, Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions, World Health Organization nutrition surveillance data, and reports issued during the crisis period.

COORDINATING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS IN YEMEN, cont'd

The humanitarian crisis has tested the limits of individual, community, institutional and system capacities in Yemen. To address the emerging gaps, substantial capacity-development support is outlined in the NNMSAP for strengthening institutions at the central, governorate and community levels to effectively address nutrition needs, build resilience and respond to shocks. Opportunities are being explored to leverage short-term humanitarian support to strengthen capacities for long-term services. For example, to strengthen linkages between developmental and humanitarian responses, the humanitarian support clusters (one national and five subnational) are represented at the SUN National Steering Committee, whilst the government line ministries co-chair the humanitarian clusters, where appropriate.

Close alignment between developmental programming and humanitarian responses in the plan allows for more efficient use of resources whilst at the same time addressing immediate needs and providing longer-term programmatic support. The plan ensures that government strategies, planning and results frameworks are properly aligned with humanitarian response planning, and vice versa, especially with respect to multiyear humanitarian response strategies. Collective outcomes for humanitarian and development partners include explicit focus on impacting pathways to improved nutrition and reducing prevalence and risk of undernutrition.

Yemen now has a concise action plan and advocacy strategy with clear objectives and actions to inform, raise awareness and sensitise politicians, policymakers and national and international partner organisations to prioritise nutrition and to leverage government and international humanitarian and development support and resources for a scale up of multisectoral nutrition interventions.

Step 2. Developing the multisectoral nutrition plan

After assessing the country context and orienting the appropriate stakeholders, the next step is to develop the **MSNP** itself, as well as the accompanying **common results framework (CRF)**, as appropriate. The first step is to develop a framework that enables multiple stakeholders—including government ministries and external stakeholders like humanitarian actors—to work towards common goals and results for improved nutrition. This initial framework will be further elaborated into a multisectoral plan narrative, which prioritises key objectives, outlines governance structures, monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms, roles and responsibilities, and advocacy and resource mobilisation strategies across ministries and organisations, as feasible. Building on the plan narrative, stakeholders may also develop a CRF, which lays out in detail the objectives, actions, targets and anticipated outputs and outcomes of the plan across a timeline, assigning clear roles and responsibilities. Emergency response activities or ongoing support to humanitarian interventions to specific populations or areas of the country should be adequately incorporated in the MSNP/CRF as a defined area of focus. The actions in the MSNP/CRF then need to be costed to ensure appropriate budgeting and resource mobilisation for implementation. Overall, both these documents will serve as a comprehensive framework for multisectoral nutrition action across state and non-state actors.

When developing an MSNP and CRF, countries may consider the following actions to ensure that plans will effectively improve linkages between humanitarian and development efforts.

Engage in joint planning and validation of the multisectoral nutrition plan

Key humanitarian and development stakeholders should continue to be engaged in joint planning and validation processes throughout the development of the MSNP and CRF. These efforts may include active consultations with both state and non-state actors to discuss certain objectives, activities, capacities or responsibilities related to the plan—to ensure they align with partners' existing activities and priorities. Actors may also be invited to participate in consultative workshops, which provide a common space for sharing concerns and priorities to contribute to the planning process. Ensuring the wide range of stakeholders working on the ground have a voice in this process will allow countries to understand and build upon existing planning structures, policies and programmes and ensure appropriate alignment and coordination once the plan is operationalised.

Once an MSNP is drafted, validation workshops provide a platform for stakeholders to build consensus and drive individual and institutional engagement with the plan. These workshops can also be an opportunity for countries to get all actors to fully endorse the plan and involve senior politicians and leaders to ensure that the priorities, actions and accountability mechanisms outlined in the plan come to realisation during its inception.



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Develop feasible and measurable collective actions and outcomes

Achieving nutrition impact requires the support and cooperation of multiple sectors and both development and humanitarian actors. MSNPs—and the accompanying CRF—provide a framework whereby nutrition stakeholders agree upon a set of common actions, results and outcomes and set targets and mechanisms to plan and measure progress towards achieving them.

As part of the contextual analysis and mapping of policies and programmes, appropriate nutrition actions for short-term humanitarian and longer-term development should become clear. It is important to ensure that both these sets of actions are adequately reflected in the plan, that any duplicative activities are streamlined, that any gaps in action are addressed and that stakeholders have defined responsibility for supporting them. Emergency preparedness and response may form a strategic objective of a plan or be integrated into broader objectives of a plan, often in terms of capacity to deliver nutrition interventions and respond to anticipated or unexpected shocks. Whether or not a country is prone to shocks (such as climate change, conflict or disease outbreaks), during the planning process, consideration should be given to resilience of the plan and risks that could derail implementation or exacerbate the existing nutrition situation.

The plan—and its development—also provides an opportunity to map how and where the short-term humanitarian and long-term development efforts of various actors fit into the wider nutrition impact pathway, which supports the selection of an appropriate nutrition goal and related objectives and outcomes for the country. This will ensure the immediate nutrition needs of those in crisis are met in the short term, and also that the longer-term improved nutrition outcomes of all vulnerable persons are addressed simultaneously.

Partners and actors can scale up, expand and strengthen nutrition activities in a way most likely to be impactful, dependent on the changing humanitarian situation.

Define clear responsibilities and a joint accountability mechanism to measure progress

Defining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in relation to specific actions or outcomes is particularly important within settings with a humanitarian or fragile context. Funding and implementation arrangements can be complex, whereby countries that face fragility or crisis often have nutrition activities that are led and funded by nongovernment agencies or organisations.

In terms of identifying responsibility for nutrition action, in less fragile contexts, government ministries will typically lead on most if not all aspects of the nutrition response. It may be sufficient to simply list a ministry or organisation as being responsible for a given action, for instance, “deworming of school-aged children to be led by the Ministry of Education, supported by UNICEF.” Alternatively, in more fragile contexts, the arrangements for implementation and funding of activities may be far more complex. Whilst improving nutrition outcomes is the central goal of the MSNP, strengthening the role of government may also be a stated or implicit objective. In such instances, it may be helpful to fully describe the role and responsibility of different non-state organisations. Where humanitarian actors hold primary responsibility for a particular action or outcome, the government may wish to outline the steps they will aim to take to increase their role over time in supporting and ultimately leading the activity. Where there is overlap or duplication of actions between humanitarian and development actors, it is important to identify a leading responsible party and supporting party to ensure clarity and accountability for carrying out those nutrition actions.



A COMPREHENSIVE MULTISECTORAL NUTRITION PLAN IN AFGHANISTAN

A major cause of malnutrition in Afghanistan is the decades-long cycle of armed conflict and violence. In recent years, humanitarian and development stakeholders have come together to put in place the comprehensive multisectoral [Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda \(AFSeN-A\) Strategic Plan](#). This plan builds on the National Peace and Development Framework and National Development Strategy, which streamline and integrate the Sustainable Development Goal targets into national policies with the support of local coordination structures. This ensures a strong unified framework to carry out multisectoral efforts to improve nutrition and ensure food security and sustainable agriculture, with the government as the lead of the strategic planning process.

The process of developing the AFSeN-A Strategic Plan was undertaken through a multisectoral consultative process involving discussions and workshops with key stakeholders at each stage. Government stakeholders included nearly all ministries and those working specifically on humanitarian actions such as the Ministry of Refugees and Reparations and the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority. A plethora of nongovernment partners were involved including academia, NGOs, UN agencies and bilateral and multilateral donors.

A key factor in Afghanistan’s successful multisectoral planning process is that both humanitarian and development actors have a long history of working side by side, setting the stage for a comprehensive approach to improving food security and nutrition. The UN, donors, and NGO community play a vital role in emergency preparedness and response in Afghanistan, coordinated through the humanitarian response emergency clusters—most importantly the food security and agriculture cluster and nutrition cluster, but also other relevant clusters for health and water, sanitation and hygiene, amongst others.

A COMPREHENSIVE MULTISECTORAL NUTRITION PLAN IN AFGHANISTAN, cont'd

There is clear cross coordination between government development actors and humanitarian clusters. For example, the Ministry of Public Health manages the Nutrition Cluster, with oversight from the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Directorate and UNICEF. At the same time, the Cluster Leads are part of the government coordination platforms within their respective sectors. As part of the plan, development partners are tasked with ensuring the ongoing coordination and communication of development and humanitarian aid for nutrition and food security.

With input from all stakeholders, the AFSeN-A Strategic Plan clearly defines structures and responsibilities to hold humanitarian and development actors accountable for nutrition activities and ensure resources and commitments for achieving short- and long-term targets. The plan links both development and humanitarian actions, providing enough details to guide timely responses to emergencies, while also allowing flexibility to adjust plans and engage humanitarian and development approaches according to the changing context and needs of the population. For example, the plan identifies the strategic objective of *ensuring food and nutrition supplies and basic services over time and in emergency situations*. This is realised through effective implementation of disaster management plans and a strong and well-coordinated approach, involving the listed stakeholders, and detailing their responsibilities and mandates. The Strategic Plan activity matrix outlines how existing sectoral and humanitarian cluster plans are reviewed to identify gaps and ensure the integration of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive criteria as part of the emergency preparedness and response plan.

Partners and the highest government officials in Afghanistan have endorsed the AFSeN-A Strategic Plan, which is now guiding both humanitarian and development actors to collaborate on improving food security and nutrition. Stakeholders are continuing to work together to operationalise the plan, such as by assuring that advocacy efforts are ongoing throughout the plan's life cycle to allow for sensitisation of new actors in the nutrition and wider political, humanitarian and development spheres in Afghanistan.

Step 3. Operationalising the multisectoral nutrition plan

Once the MSNP/CRF are fully developed—with the inclusion of resilience planning and emergency mitigation actions—and costed, they should be endorsed by all partners and at the highest level of government to ensure momentum from all state and non-state actors and that roles and responsibilities are agreed and will lead to action and accountability. Depending on the structure of the plan and the country context, subnational plans may also need to be developed based on the overarching national plan to clearly prioritise and guide action at the subnational level, including participation and efforts of humanitarian partners in each locale. Humanitarian actors can also work to align their respective plans, timelines and workstreams with the national plan and CRF to ensure that implementation and actions on the ground are united. Once this is done, country stakeholders can make efforts to launch the implementation of the plan. This step can include **mobilising resources and advocating for the plan, setting up monitoring and evaluation and surveillance systems, establishing governance structures and building capacity across sectors and actors.**

When operationalising the MSNP and CRF, countries may consider the following actions to ensure that the inception and implementation of nutrition actions will effectively improve linkages between humanitarian and development efforts.

Advocate for and mobilise resources across sectors and actors

Advocacy is important for raising awareness of MSNPs, getting buy-in from all partners and implementers, including state and non-state actors working in crisis or long-term development, building coalitions, generating accountability and, eventually, creating a favourable environment for policy and practice. An advocacy strategy can be drafted during MSNP development or as part of plan implementation and should include input from nutrition coordination platforms and humanitarian clusters or actors, as appropriate. If humanitarian actors or clusters have existing advocacy and communication strategies, the content and messaging should be aligned with national nutrition advocacy planning. This will help ensure buy-in from all nutrition actors, thus working to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development workstreams.



PATH/Minzayar Oo

By outlining targeted priorities and planned budget allocations across ministries, bilateral and multilateral donors and non-state humanitarian actors, all elements of the MSNP can act as advocacy tools to help mobilise resources and ensure funding for both short-term and long-term planned activities. The plan can also provide a financial framework for leveraging and coordinating donor funding, particularly when there is a well costed MSNP/CRF and a [financial gap analysis](#) establishing where existing commitments fall and where activities require further investment. Where government capacity to absorb and utilise funding may be lacking, having such a framework in place is essential to facilitate the transition from humanitarian funding to state-led support. In many countries, multi-donor funds for nutrition have aligned behind MSNPs, with government playing a key role in managing distribution and coordinating implementation.

Ensure effective governance structures are in place across the workstreams

An important function of MSNPs is identifying and building upon coordination platforms for multisectoral nutrition action that are already in place. In humanitarian settings, coordination can be challenging, as the humanitarian cluster can be operating separately from other coordination platforms, like those managed by the government. In

countries where a humanitarian cluster system has been activated, it is important to clearly outline the role of the cluster coordination platforms in relation to existing or envisioned nutrition coordination platforms, identify which actions are currently being coordinated by the cluster system, and ensure lines of communication are open between other coordination platforms. This may be outlined on an activity-by-activity basis within a CRF or described more generally within the plan narrative.

Respective governance roles will depend on the context. As previously noted, in fragile contexts, often nutrition actions are led by the cluster system where the government does not have the resources or capacity to do so. Transitioning the coordination of an activity from a cluster-based system to other multisectoral nutrition coordination platforms may or may not be feasible or desirable. However, in many cases, government-led, multisectoral coordination platforms can support the cluster system by providing a longer-term lens and framework for planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. One approach

to strengthen linkages is to identify bilateral or multilateral engagement between ministries and external partner organisations and identify what preconditions would need to be in place to allow for activities to be transitioned over time, fully or partly, into a national multisectoral nutrition coordination platform. As much as appropriate, this information should be incorporated into the MSNP. Once agreement is made towards increasing engagement and linkages, this strategic direction can be incorporated into the standing agenda of the various multi-stakeholder platforms and planning meetings.

There may also be opportunities to establish one or several technical working groups of relevant development and humanitarian actors, such as the integrated management of acute malnutrition, infant and young child feeding, assessments, monitoring or surveillance data, and food security. Technical working groups can act as main points of contact for targeted support and communication between development and humanitarian actors on specific topic areas and provide information and advice to decision-makers and committees on a regular basis.

Strengthen humanitarian and development systems for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

A key area of multisectoral nutrition planning is strengthening surveillance systems and ensuring clear accountability mechanisms that are agreed upon and endorsed by all stakeholders. Planning for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system strengthening should involve working with humanitarian actors to integrate data from humanitarian efforts into nutrition plan reporting and data use. By understanding which partners or workstreams are collecting which data or indicators related to humanitarian or acute malnutrition issues, duplication can be avoided—leading to time and cost savings. Data reporting and data review should constitute regular agenda items for nutrition coordination platforms and cluster meetings throughout the MSNP/CRF implementation. This will aid in streamlining data collection, analysis and review and help with data quality (completeness, consistency, precision and timeliness). Institutional arrangements should be explored to support data sharing and reporting between stakeholders. This also offers an opportunity to streamline reporting timelines and planning cycles. In countries with humanitarian clusters and activities, incorporating partner organisations' actions within government MEL systems can be an important step towards strengthening and streamlining MEL and demonstrating the ability to manage and track funds. In turn, this effort can help countries make the transition from humanitarian to government-owned systems over the longer term.

Build human capacity across sectors and actors

Leadership and coordination of humanitarian action by the cluster system is often driven by a lack of capacity of a government to meet the needs of its own population. This may be due to acute shortages caused by increased needs caused by the onset of an emergency, or it may be due to more long-term and chronic capacity deficits. Building the capacity of country-level stakeholders has become an increasing area of focus for humanitarian work in recent years. However, given resource constraints and short timelines of humanitarian funding cycles, it remains challenging. For instance, the often-informal training of the health workforce by international NGOs or UN agencies, whilst potentially building competencies, often results in a cadre of health workers with little or no recognised qualifications and a number of unpredictable and unregulated skill sets.¹⁸

Appropriate training and accreditation according to national policy is key to leveraging a workforce for the development of national nutrition and health systems. MSNPs provide an ideal framework for identifying longer-term objectives and actions across sectors, amongst humanitarian and development partners and between public and private education, to ensure the long-term development of a nutrition workforce with a solid understanding of both humanitarian and development nutrition needs.

At the level of nutrition coordination platforms and management, there is also a need to develop the skillset of both humanitarian and development actors to better understand and support each other's roles and needs. For example, humanitarian actors working in protracted crisis situations can be engaged throughout the multisectoral planning and implementation process to develop a greater understanding of the development context whilst actors working in government ministries, like the ministry of health or agriculture, can be trained on humanitarian response coordination and procedures.

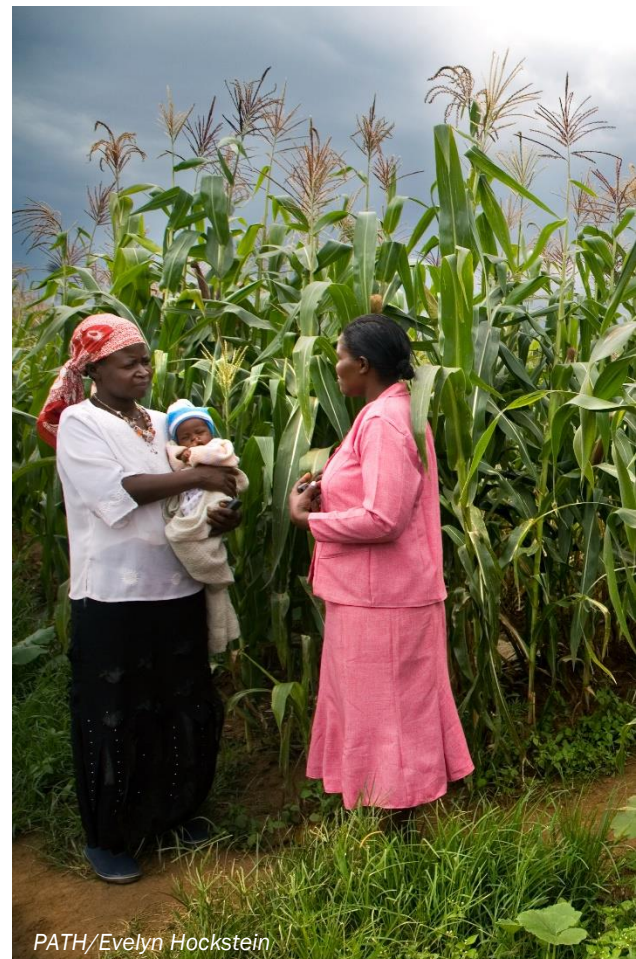
These capacity-building goals can be incorporated into further planning documents, such as subnational nutrition plans, particularly in areas that are heavily conflict- or crisis-affected. Non-state and partner planning documentation should align with and include similar capacity development goals and actions so as to ensure coordination and alignment.

Conclusion

Strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus has been recognised as an important action for addressing malnutrition during crises and beyond. Humanitarian and development workstreams should increasingly engage with each other to leverage their comparative advantages for better short-term and long-term nutrition outcomes.

The multisectoral nutrition planning process offers a clear opportunity for greater collaboration, coordination and coherence between humanitarian and development workstreams—leading to more effective and efficient nutrition action. Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to create commonly agreed, measurable goals, objectives and actions requires the combined efforts of state and non-state actors working in nutrition from all sectors and workstreams, both humanitarian and development. Likewise, monitoring, analysing, advocating for and financing multiyear context-specific implementation plans that have been drafted and agreed by all partners will help to achieve shared targets, improve efficiency and maintain accountability. The ultimate goal of bridging the humanitarian-development divide is to build the capacity of country implementers and state-level actors, particularly multisectoral nutrition coordination platforms, so that governments can become fully responsible for effective and efficient planning, implementation and monitoring of both humanitarian and development actions for nutrition.

Even in countries less affected by emergencies and humanitarian crises, the changing climate and political and economic volatility in the world suggests that all countries should be alert to destabilisation of carefully laid plans. It is, therefore, imperative that humanitarian and development partners work together to define risks, resilience measures, contingency plans and appropriate actions for each step of the multisectoral nutrition planning process.



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About MQSUN+

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