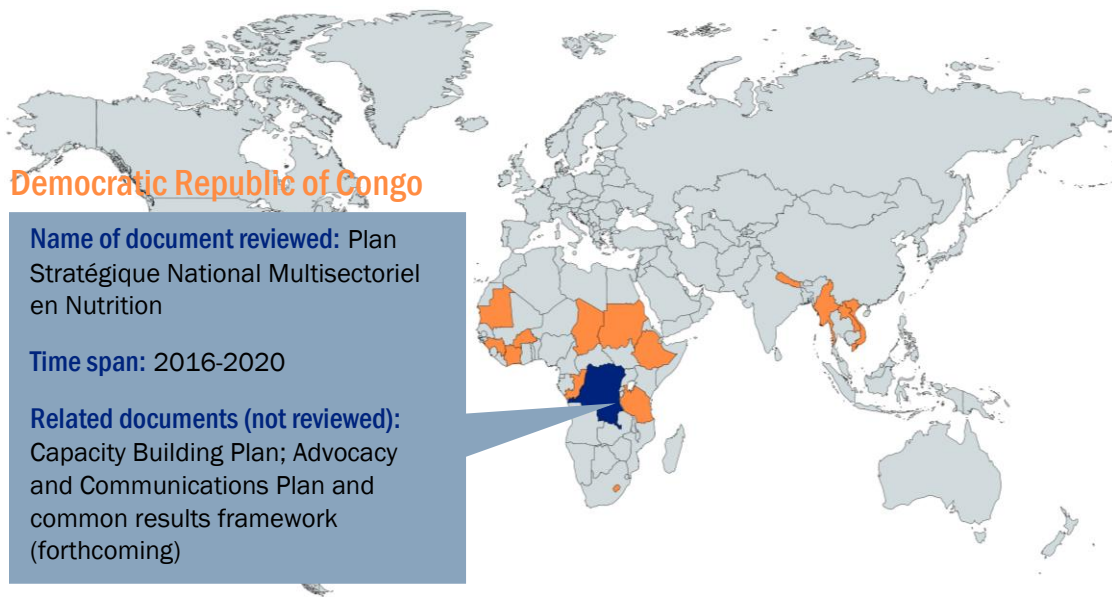


# National Nutrition Plan Assessment:

## Democratic Republic of Congo

In December 2016, the United Nations Network for the SUN Movement and the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS), with the support of an expert group, developed and launched the [Checklist on the Criteria and Characteristics of “Good” National Nutrition Plans](#) (“SUN Checklist”). In 2018, at the request of the SMS, the Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+) project undertook a systematic assessment of the main planning document of 15 countries’ multisectoral national nutrition action plans, according to the criteria in the SUN Checklist. This brief summarises select strengths (✓) and suggested areas for improvement with recommendations ( - ) for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), organised by each of the five areas in the SUN Checklist: (1) situational analysis and policy and programming review; (2) stakeholder engagement and high-level political commitment processes; (3) costs and budgetary framework; (4) implementation and managing arrangements; and (5) monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review. A section on gender considerations is also included.



### Overview

DRC’s *Plan Stratégique National Multisectoriel en Nutrition 2016-2020* is the country’s first multisectoral nutrition plan since it joined the SUN Movement in 2013. The plan includes: the Strategy, which has been finalised, and the Operational Plan, which is in draft. The plan encompasses six strategic areas: 1) access to healthcare and nutrition services; 2) promotion of essential family and infant and young child feeding practices, and water and sanitation; 3) increased availability and access to nutritious and diverse foods (including high-energy, biofortified and fortified foods); 4) strengthened nutrition emergency management and resilience; 5) strengthened nutrition information and knowledge management system; and 6) strengthened nutrition governance and multisectoral coordination.

## Key strengths

DRC's plan provides a comprehensive review of the causes of malnutrition in the country, which offers a solid basis for the proposed interventions across multiple sectors. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- ✓ Describes key indicators of nutritional status of children and women of reproductive age, as well as adolescents. The multisectoral causes of malnutrition are comprehensively presented according to UNICEF's conceptual framework with country-specific analyses. Key disparities are reported by sex, urban/rural, province and wealth quintile, and there is reference to the variety of tribes/ethnic groups in the country with potentially different needs.
- ✓ Includes expected impact indicators that are SMART and incorporate both World Health Assembly targets and country-specific indicators, with baseline measurements to measure progress.
- ✓ Proposes actions that are wide-ranging and respond to basic and underlying causes of malnutrition and system-wide governance and financing deficiencies described in the situational analysis.
- ✓ Contains emergency planning (e.g. establishing a plan for emergency supply stocks), social protection measures for communities in crisis and longer-term development activities (e.g. promoting income-generating activities among populations vulnerable to crises and capacity building among women).
- ✓ Presents estimated costs by strategic area that clearly include relevant inputs (equipment, staffing, etc.) and activities for governance, formation of monitoring and evaluation platforms and capacity building.
- ✓ Prioritises provinces with the highest burden of stunting in the event that funding is insufficient, clearly communicates the implications in terms of estimated numbers of lives saved and cases of stunting averted.
- ✓ Mentions capacity building in several activities, both in terms of training individuals in technical nutrition knowledge and building institutional capacity for multisectoral planning at national and subnational level.

## Key recommendations

### Area 1: Situational analysis and policy and programming review

- The roles and responsibilities of the multisectoral steering committee, the coordination bodies at national-, regional- and prefectural-level and reporting and accountability structures are unclear.
  - **Recommendation:** Develop terms of reference for each group that outline committee composition, expectations and reporting mechanisms that illustrate how each group will interact with each other to ensure good progress and target achievements.

### Area 2: Stakeholders' engagement and high-level political commitment process

- The development of the plan and how stakeholders were involved in the process are not described, and leadership of and high-level commitment to the plan are not explicitly stated. In addition, proposed actions only briefly touch on advocacy and communication of the plan's approach. However, it is noted that an advocacy and communications plan will be developed.

→ **Recommendation:** In the development of the forthcoming advocacy and communications plan, ensure advocacy with key stakeholders at multiple levels (e.g. politicians, community leaders, plan beneficiaries) is considered to facilitate buy-in, resource mobilisation and uptake of plan activities. In the next iteration of the plan, incorporate a brief section describing the process of the plan's development and how stakeholders from different sectors were engaged and have committed to its implementation. This ensures transparency on the commitment of different sectors and stakeholders to the targets and holds them accountable for implementing actions to achieve the plan's goals.

### Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

— The plan includes a detailed budget and all activities are costed, along with scenario planning for funding shortfalls, but it does not explain the primary methods envisaged for resource mobilisation (including analysis of the current funding gap), disbursement of funds and ongoing financial tracking.

→ **Recommendation:** In formulating details of the common results framework, determine how mobilisation of funds (a Result 6.1 indicator) will be calculated, and ensure results are disaggregated by donor/government and sector to identify weaknesses in funding arrangements.

### Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

— The plan provides information on coordination mechanisms, including at the subnational level through provincial committees. However, it lists implementing organisations for each action without designated responsible parties for implementation.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure that the forthcoming common results framework clearly designates the agency/ministry responsible for leading each activity and reporting on results; and develop guidance on annual planning for all government actors involved in the plan.

### Area 5: Monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review

— At the time of the plan's review, the common results framework has not been finalised.

→ **Recommendation:** Include annual targets for output indicators and responsible parties for collecting the information in the common results framework (currently an empty table in the Operational Plan). In the next iteration of the main planning document, incorporate these basic elements (even if a more detailed monitoring and evaluation document is later developed) so that appropriate human and financial resources can be allocated as soon as the plan is approved.

— The plan contains very little information about how its implementation and progress will be monitored and how actors will be held accountable.

→ **Recommendation:** In a separate monitoring and evaluation plan or in a future iteration of the plan, elaborate on how data, results and progress, as well as lessons learned, will be communicated to stakeholders, including communities.

## Gender consideration

Beyond the SUN Checklist, all country plans were assessed with a gender lens for their consideration and inclusion of gender dimensions of nutrition. See supplemental [gender brief](#) for the specific factors that were considered.

While gender is one of its guiding principles, the plan does not provide any detail how gender will be mainstreamed across planned actions. This could be strengthened through the following recommendations. It is acknowledged that some of this may have already been completed or documented in supplemental planning documents.

- **Situational analysis:** The plan includes sex-disaggregated data on the rates of child anaemia and obesity (females only) and some discussion around gender-related social norms. Beyond this, data in the situational analysis should be sex- and age-disaggregated for nutrition-specific indicators and relevant nutrition-sensitive indicators to inform targeted and appropriate interventions. If not already done, a gender assessment could be conducted as part of an updated situational analysis to fully assess gender-related dimensions of nutrition in the DRC context (e.g. exploring traditional gender roles/norms and how these may influence nutrition).
- **Planned actions:** Women's empowerment and decreased women's workload are noted expected outcomes. Beyond this, ensure all relevant planned actions consider the unique circumstances of different populations based on the situational analysis, including actions that address underlying inequities and broader harmful gender norms, where possible. Also, establish mechanisms to assess and address the specific needs of men, women, boys and girls across planned actions.
- **Capacity building:** Capacity-building actions should include measures to encourage active participation of both men and women (and address any unique needs or potential barriers to participation). Capacity-building efforts should also broadly integrate gender discussions, where relevant, to address gaps in knowledge and action around gender-related needs and differences.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Selection of appropriate gender-related indicators should be based on DRC's individual situational analysis. Relevant data should also be disaggregated by sex and age, and there should be a documented plan for how sex-disaggregated data will be used to inform decision making. It is recommended that all nutrition-specific indicators be sex-disaggregated, and disaggregation of nutrition-sensitive indicators should be determined based on the country context.

For future nutrition planning at both national and subnational level, the involvement of gender-experienced stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Women's Affairs, gender representative CSOs, relevant UN agencies/international NGOs) and the discussion of gender norms and differences can strengthen the consideration of gender across nutrition actions.

## Moving forward

These recommendations can be applied to either the ongoing implementation process for DRC's national nutrition plan or to the next iteration of the plan once the time frame of the current plan comes to a close in 2020. Country stakeholders should refer back the [SUN Checklist](#) to consider other areas of improvement. For additional information on how closely this plan aligns with the SUN Checklist, please contact SMS or [MQSUN+@path.org](mailto:MQSUN+@path.org) to request a full copy of the plan assessment.

MQSUN+ belongs to the Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) programme with partners Nutrition International and the Emergency Nutrition Network to strengthen the capacity of the 60 countries within the SUN Movement to deliver policies and programmes which reduce malnutrition.

For more information about MQSUN+

Website:

[mqsunplus.path.org](http://mqsunplus.path.org)

Email:

[mqsun+@path.org](mailto:mqsun+@path.org)

Social media:



Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus



@MQSUNplus

## Acknowledgements

This brief was compiled by PATH under MQSUN+: Jolene Wun, Amanda Coile, Carrie Hemminger and Tamsin Walters. Special acknowledgements to the SMS for their collaboration on this initiative, and the MQSUN+ reviewers of this country plan, Jolene Wun and Assumpta Mukabutera.

MQSUN+ cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this brief. This document was produced by MQSUN+ through support provided by UK aid and the UK Government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies.

