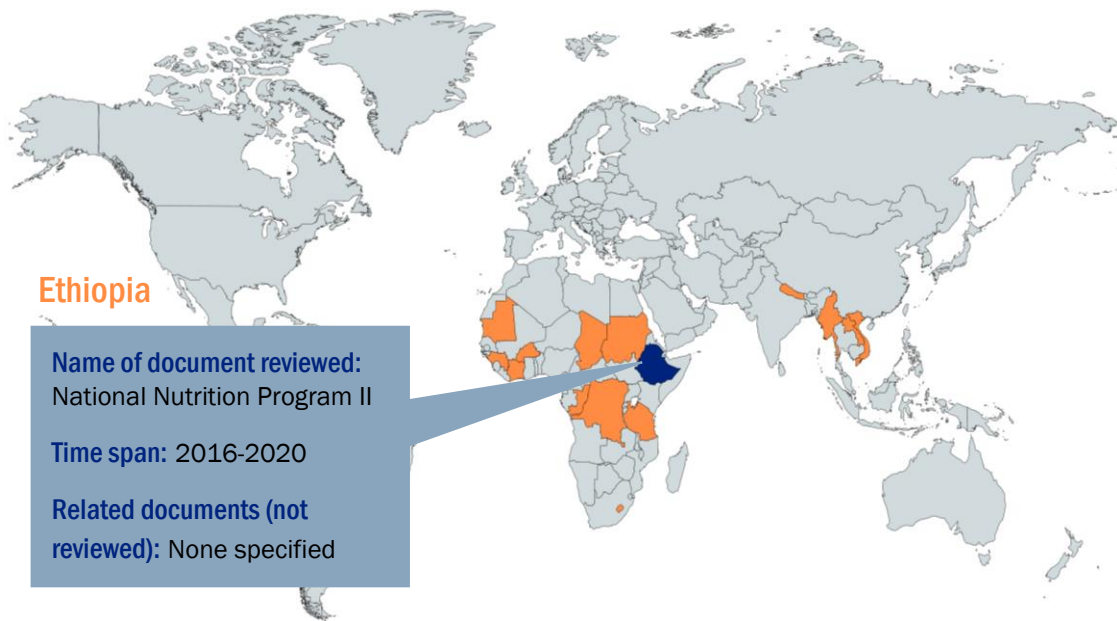


National Nutrition Plan Assessment: Ethiopia

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 Ethiopia, 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

Ethiopia’s *National Nutrition Program II 2016-2020* is the country’s second national nutrition implementation plan, and the first plan since the country joined the SUN Movement in 2010. The plan involves 12 ministries and organises its actions around five strategic objectives: 1) improving the nutritional status of women and adolescent girls; 2) improving the nutritional status of children up to 10 years; 3) improving service delivery for communicable and non-communicable disease; 4) strengthening the implementation of nutrition-sensitive interventions; and 5) improving multisectoral coordination and capacity.

Key strengths

Considering the SUN Checklist, Ethiopia's plan either currently includes the key aspects of a multisectoral nutrition plan or indicates an intention to develop further corresponding documentation. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- ✓ Includes expected results that are consistent with relevant World Health Assembly targets for addressing undernutrition as well as a target to reduce overweight in women of reproductive age.
- ✓ Summarises lessons learned from the previous national nutrition plan and incorporates them into concrete actions in the current plan. Proposed actions are comprehensive and include both interventions proven to be effective as well as piloting of newer interventions (e.g. soft conditionality to promote attendance at events).
- ✓ Clearly describes how nutrition has been integrated into various sector strategies.
- ✓ Allocates a section to disaster risk management and includes strengthening early warning and emergency information systems, supporting nutrition emergency response and behaviour change communication regarding resilience and risk management.
- ✓ Describes multisectoral bodies tasked with plan implementation, with the terms of reference for the national-level bodies presented as an annex. Moreover, includes an advocacy and communication plan that seeks to create nutrition champions and promote implementation at all levels, in addition to communicating information on nutrition to the general population.
- ✓ Provides cost estimates for the interventions across all years of implementation, and includes current contribution levels from both government and donors to calculate the budget gap.
- ✓ Includes capacity building explicitly in a strategic objective with specific capacity-building actions further integrated across plan activities; further describes the types of capacity building needed to implement the plan, including nutrition workforce, logistics/supply, nutrition information system and community-level needs.
- ✓ Includes a comprehensive set of impact, outcome and output indicators, with data sources and annual targets in the Accountability and Results Matrix. Outlines plans for mid-term and final evaluations of plan implementation, with this Matrix as a basis.
- ✓ Clearly assigns the responsibility of coordinating operations research to a specific organisation (Ethiopian Public Health Institute).

Key recommendations

Area 1: Situational analysis and policy and programming review

- The situational analysis focuses on national level data. However, it does not fully explore the specific issues and underlying factors behind high malnutrition rates in Ethiopia. Details on disparities within the country in regards to nutritional status or determinants of malnutrition in different groups are also not included.
 - **Recommendation:** Consider providing a more detailed situational analysis that is specific to Ethiopia and disaggregates data by region, sex, urban/rural, socio-economic status, etc. to assist

in better understanding the situation in the country and to facilitate targeting of the most vulnerable groups with the most appropriate interventions.

- While the plan includes a dedicated area to food emergencies and disaster management, it does not discuss the risks to general plan implementation nor provides mitigation strategies.
 - **Recommendation:** In current or future planning efforts, review the conceptual framework to identify risks to plan implementation and develop mitigation strategies to respond to these risks.

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

- It is clear from the plan content that multiple stakeholders participated in the plan development. However, it does not elaborate on the overall process of the plan development and how the specific stakeholders were involved.
 - **Recommendation:** In the next iteration of the plan, include a section describing the process of the plan's development and how stakeholders from different sectors (from both the national and subnational levels) 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

- Although estimated costs are provided in the plan for both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions, it is not clear whether governance and operational costs have been appropriately budgeted.
 - **Recommendation:** Ensure that governance and operational activities are costed in the plan, and in future planning documentation, provide sufficient detail to illustrate that all planned activities are included in the overall cost estimate.

Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

- While the government's role and mechanisms to operationalise the plan are clear, it does not list the responsible parties for the implementation of each planned action.
 - **Recommendation:** Develop a matrix that states the lead and supporting organisations for each activity and includes timelines for activities to guide annual operational planning and ensure accountability.

Area 5: Monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review

- The plan states an intention to set up a multisectoral nutrition information platform at the national level to monitor plan implementation. However, it does not clarify how nutrition-related data will be collected or analysed.
 - **Recommendation:** When developing this platform, establish and document mechanisms related to where the platform will be housed, who has responsibility for reporting and providing data to the system and how the data will be collected, analysed and disseminated.

Gender considerations

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.

Gender is thoroughly considered throughout Ethiopia's plan. It includes "gender-sensitive nutrition implementation improved" as an expected result, highlights the Ministry of Women and Children's role in ensuring the mainstreaming of gender across sectors and expresses commitment to gender-sensitive capacity building. In addition to these aspects, the plan 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:** 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 Ethiopia context (e.g. exploring traditional gender roles/norms and how these may influence nutrition).
- **Planned actions:** While several activities incorporate gender dimensions for nutrition, ensure that all relevant planned actions consider the unique circumstances of different populations based on the situational/gender assessment, including actions that address underlying inequities and broader harmful gender norms, where possible.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Selection of appropriate gender-related indicators should be based on Ethiopia's individual situational/gender analysis. As noted in the plan, 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. For nutrition-specific indicators, it is recommended that all should 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 Ethiopia'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 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

Email: mqsun+@path.org

Social media:



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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 Tamsin Walters.

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