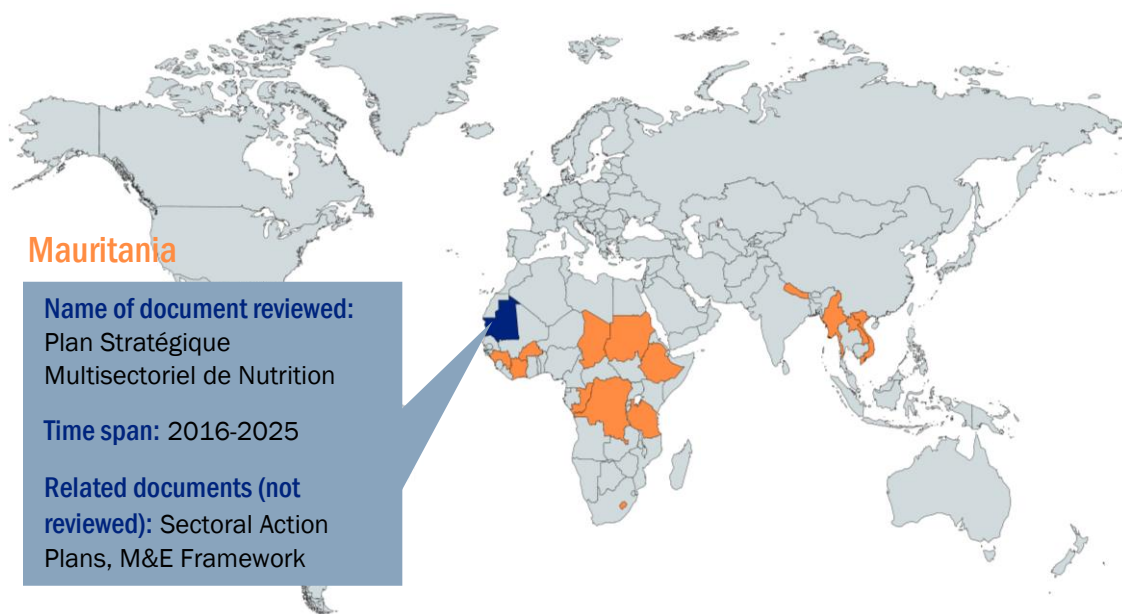


# National Nutrition Plan Assessment:

## Mauritania

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 Mauritania, 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

Mauritania’s *Plan Stratégique Multisectoriel de Nutrition 2016-2025* is the country’s first multisectoral nutrition plan since it joined the SUN Movement in 2011. The plan aims to contribute to ensuring the survival and quality of life of children through six strategic areas: 1) ensuring the availability, access and consumption of food of sufficient quantity and quality; 2) adoption of infant and young child feeding practices; 3) improved hygiene, water and sanitation; 4) access to health and nutrition services; 5) prevention of overweight/obesity; and 6) engagement, coordination and monitoring and evaluation.

## Key strengths

The situational analysis, objectives and actions are clearly presented, and the plan has a good range of nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and governance activities. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- ✓ Describes key nutritional indicators among children under five in detail and devotes significant discussion to regional differences in vulnerability to undernutrition as well as touching on gender issues. Comprehensively presents the multisectoral causes of malnutrition, using UNICEF's conceptual framework applied to country-specific analyses.
- ✓ Includes expected results that are consistent with all relevant World Health Assembly targets.
- ✓ Incorporates a functional early warning system into the expected results to anticipate and address emergencies.
- ✓ Includes a description of the coordination committees at both the national and subnational level, and includes a terms of reference for the national coordination committee that conveys high-level endorsement of the plan.

## Key recommendations

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

- While the plan has clear objectives and targets, it does not specify the actions to be implemented, instead noting that each sector will prepare their own plan to achieve the expected impacts and outcomes outlined in the document.
  - **Recommendation:** Add specific actions to the common results framework, derived from consultation with the various sectors, along with responsible and supporting parties and timelines. This will increase accountability, ensure the plan is actionable and assist with estimating costs. Future iterations of the plan should include actions in the main document to facilitate planning, programme monitoring and prioritisation across the plan.

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

- The plan states clearly that it has high-level commitment, with its National Nutrition Committee being chaired by the Prime Minister. However, there is no section explaining how the plan was developed or describing any of the processes by which stakeholders from various sectors were brought together to agree on the objectives and targets.
  - **Recommendation:** In future iterations of the plans, include a brief section describing who was involved in the development of the plan and how that engagement was facilitated. 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.
- Despite the realisation of a significant shortfall in funding for the plan, evidenced by the costing and financial gap estimation, the plan does not include a section on advocacy and communication.
  - **Recommendation:** When developing specific actions for Strategic Axis 6, consider including measures to advocate for increased funding to the plan by both the government and donors, and

consider developing a communications and advocacy strategy to raise nutrition up on the national agenda and increase awareness of its importance for the country's development.

### Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

- The plan includes estimated costs for nutrition-specific actions only. As well, the financing analysis describes government budget allocations, but makes no mention of development partners and any commitments they have already made or intend to make in country. To meet the funding gap, the plan notes that the budget would need to increase by a considerable amount.
  - **Recommendation:** Ensure documentation of estimated costs and current financing levels for all actions (nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and nutrition governance). The financial analysis should include the current and expected level of assistance from donors and implementing partners, in addition to the government, to provide a comprehensive picture of nutrition funding. In the event of a budget shortfall, issue guidance to national and subnational bodies on how to prioritise activities or particular high-burden regions using available data and transparent criteria.

### Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

- While the plan is clear that it is an orientation document from which the various sectors will develop their individual plans, it could go further in identifying the responsible parties for each activity area and stating where and how sectors will need to work together to ensure an integrated approach.
  - **Recommendation:** Develop a matrix that states the lead and supporting organisations for each activity area and includes timelines for implementation and annual operational planning.
- There is minimal discussion of the existing individual and organisational capacity at the national or subnational level to implement the plan, and capacity development activities are not described in the document.
  - **Recommendation:** Ensure that capacity exists for plan implementation and that any capacity development needs are identified and costed. This may require a capacity assessment across sectors as well as consideration of the available institutional arrangements for training and/or available development partner support.

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

- The plan's list of indicators associated with the common results framework only includes outcome indicators, with baseline values and endline targets.
  - **Recommendation:** After developing actions, add process indicators with annual targets to monitor intermediate progress of the plan, and specify data sources for each indicator. Future iterations of the plan should include these elements, unless they are accompanied by a separate, detailed monitoring and evaluation plan.

## 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.

Mauritania's plan includes gender equity as one of its guiding principles, and highlights planned actions to reduce early marriage and improve girls' education and women's literacy to contribute to improved nutrition. However, there is an absence of details on 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:** While several gender-sensitive factors are presented in the situational analysis, a gender assessment could be conducted as part of an updated analysis to fully assess gender-related dimensions of nutrition in the Mauritania context (e.g. exploring traditional gender roles and norms and how these may influence nutrition), if not already done. As well, 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.
- **Planned actions:** While several activities are focused on adolescent girls and women, ensure that 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. As well, 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 Mauritania's individual situational/gender 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. 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 national and subnational levels, involvement of gender-experienced stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Women's Affairs, gender representative CSOs, relevant UN agencies/international NGOs) and 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 Mauritania'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 2025. 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.

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