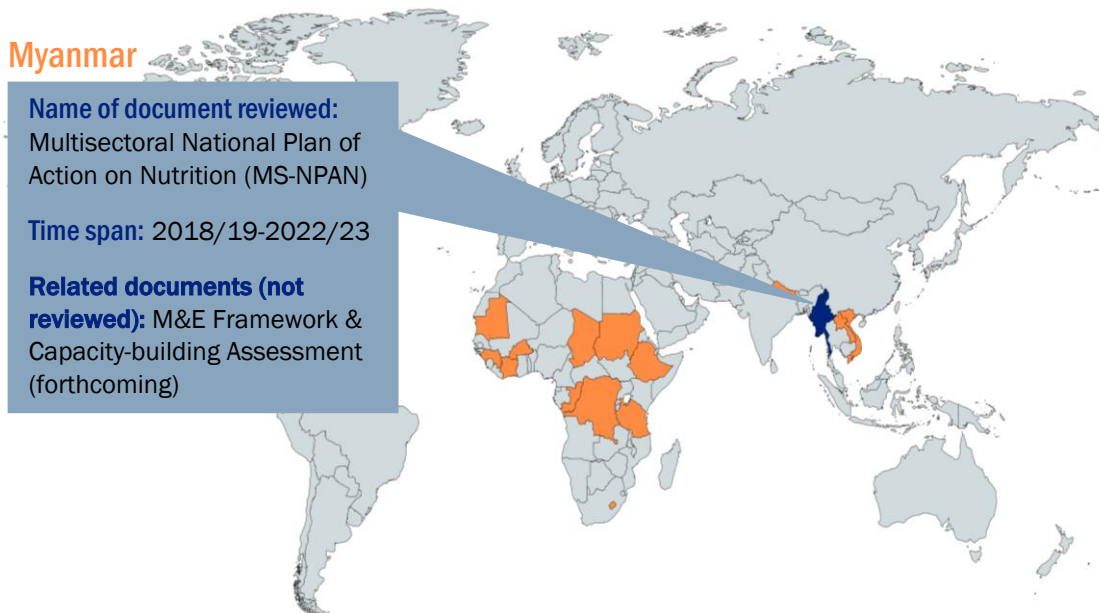


National Nutrition Plan Assessment: Myanmar

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 Myanmar, 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

Myanmar’s *Multisectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) 2018/19-2022/23*, is the country’s first national nutrition plan since it joined the SUN Movement in 2013. It proposes a set of actions led by four ministries (Health and Sports; Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation; Social Welfare; Relief and Resettlement). The first year of the plan, presented as an inception phase, will focus on the finalisation of guidelines for multisectoral coordination, a capacity assessment and development plan, monitoring and evaluation systems and state/regional planning; while the remaining four years will be devoted to implementation of state/regional plans, capacity building and generation of data.

Key strengths

The plan includes a strong coordination structure and well-formulated principles. While the plan does not contain all Checklist elements, it provides a clear picture of next steps. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- ✓ Comprehensively presents trends and regional burdens of stunting and wasting, and summarises regional priorities with regard to micronutrient deficiencies among children under five and women.
- ✓ Includes expected results with nutritional status indicators in alignment to the World Health Assembly targets and several diet-related, non-communicable disease targets with clear timelines for achieving the targets.
- ✓ Builds on experience of a pilot phase implemented and reviewed prior to the plan's development. As such, criteria for prioritising implementation areas are well developed and specified.
- ✓ Although multisectoral governance arrangements are incomplete, describes the finalisation process at national/subnational levels (through assessment of coordination and implementation capacity within the first year) and acknowledges the importance of coordination and oversight.
- ✓ Clearly summarises the methodology and results for developing preliminary cost estimates, existing levels of financing and the financial gap. Cost estimates include crosscutting actions, such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and building capacity for coordination/governance of the plan.
- ✓ Acknowledges the need for institutional capacity building in plan coordination and implementation, and presents concrete steps for assessing and developing a plan to address it.

Key recommendations

Area 1: Situational analysis and policy and programming review

- The plan acknowledges risks to nutrition generally but does not explicitly describe efforts to mitigate them and does not describe risks to plan implementation itself.
 - **Recommendation:** For the next plan iteration, review the conceptual framework to identify implementation risks and assumptions and develop appropriate mitigation strategies. As well, assess existing disaster responses and include emergency plan development and early warning surveillance system strengthening and/or ensure emergency responses are in line with Sphere standards, as appropriate.
- While the plan does note adolescents' and girls' nutrition in relation to schools, it provides minimal details on the nutritional status or specific determinants of nutrition among adolescent girls, even though they are a specific target group mentioned in the plan's overall goal.
 - **Recommendation:** Review adolescent levels of underweight, anaemia, school attendance, etc. in the first year of the plan and consider this information when designing the final targeted interventions in the plan.

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

- The plan does not describe how existing codes of conduct and legal obligations applicable to each stakeholder were used to prevent and manage conflicts of interest during the planning process.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure a plan is in place to address conflicts of interests that may arise during plan implementation.

- While development partners are given the role to advocate and communicate to maintain high-level commitment, no specific advocacy strategy or actions are mentioned to ensure buy-in at national and subnational levels.

→ **Recommendation:** If not already done, consider developing an advocacy and communication strategy to ensure advocacy with key stakeholders at multiple levels (e.g. politicians, community leaders, plan beneficiaries) to facilitate buy-in, resource mobilisation and uptake of plan activities.

Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

- The plan does not describe a mechanism for managing financial resources or tracking expenditures over the course of plan implementation.

→ **Recommendation:** Consider developing a system of tracking financial expenditures (both public and donor sources) for all of the plan's proposed actions, based on existing financial management and tracking systems within sectors and among partners; and include an indicator for government spending on nutrition as an outcome measure for advocacy efforts.

Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

- The plan currently does not include the lead and supporting agencies responsible for the proposed actions. However, it is expected that implementation and governance arrangements will be finalised once the capacity assessment has been completed in the first year.

→ **Recommendation:** In the forthcoming planning, clearly document the lead and supporting agencies (both governmental and nongovernmental) for each of the proposed actions, and ensure timelines for national/subnational planning are clear and feasible. As well, the proposed governance arrangements and coordination structures should be integrated into the costing.

Area 5: Monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review

- The planning document that was reviewed does not include an M&E framework. However, it is noted that this will be finalised in the first year of implementation.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure the forthcoming framework clarifies the planned reporting processes from local to central level that will build off existing sectoral reviews, enable course corrections and have results that are shared back to beneficiaries.

- The plan does not describe how operational research priorities will be coordinated or how research findings will be disseminated.

→ **Recommendation:** Identify a research body that will work with the entities in charge of monitoring and evaluation of the plan to prioritise research topics, incorporate lessons learned into annual planning and disseminate findings.

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.

While Myanmar's plan briefly mentions the gender-related barriers to improved nutrition and proposes actions to address them, there is no explicit commitment to gender in the plan's overall principles and 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:** 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 Myanmar context (e.g. exploring traditional gender roles/norms and how these may influence nutrition).
- **Planned actions:** While the plan provides some gender-related activities on child care practices and women's participation and decision-making in agriculture and other sectors, 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. As well, include gender equality as a crosscutting strategic principle or goal, and 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.
- **M&E:** Selection of appropriate gender-related indicators should be based on Myanmar'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 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 Myanmar'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 2022/23. 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.

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