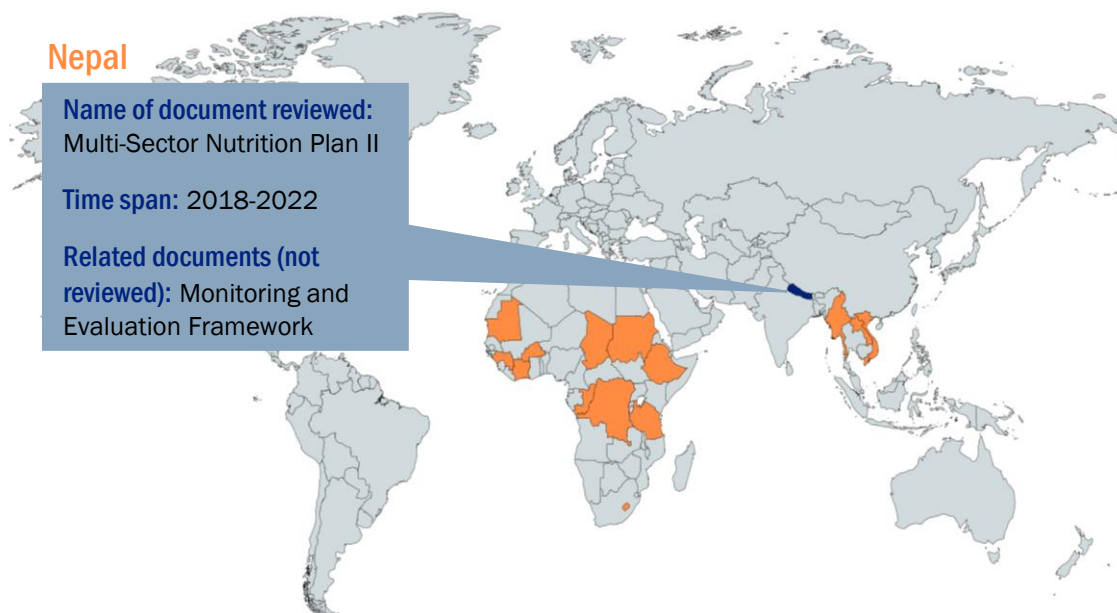


# National Nutrition Plan Assessment: Nepal

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 Nepal, 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

Nepal’s *Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan II (2018-2022)* (MSNP) is the country’s second national nutrition plan since it joined the SUN Movement in 2011. The plan is led by the National Planning Commission and supported by seven sectoral ministries—Health; Education; Agriculture; Livestock; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; Women, Children and Social Welfare; and Federal Affairs and Local Development. It aims to contribute to the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals with regard to nutrition through improved access and equitable use of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services and improved policies and multisectoral coordination at all levels.

## Key strengths

Nepal has an elaborate and comprehensive second-generation multisectoral nutrition plan, which can serve as a good model. It presents a sound analysis and lessons learned from the first plan's implementation, which clearly influenced the development of this plan. Below are a few key strengths:

- ✓ Comprehensively summarises the nutrition situation in the country and analyses the progress made on a wide number of nutrition outcomes and behaviours in recent years.
- ✓ Includes all nutrition-related World Health Assembly impact indicators and country-specific indicators with clear baseline and target values; and aligns to other global frameworks and targets.
- ✓ Proposes actions that are wide-ranging and respond to most of the issues described in the situational analysis. Many of the actions also aim to address bottlenecks of different kinds, including equity (particularly gender), financial sustainability and planning and coordination.
- ✓ Includes approaches to address nutrition emergencies due to natural disasters, including development of preparedness and contingency plans and nutrition clusters at local level, and to deliver integrated management of acute malnutrition services that meet SPHERE standards.
- ✓ Clearly describes the responsibilities and composition of existing national and provincial multisectoral governance bodies, as well as details on proposed district, local government and ward committees tasked with local planning and implementation.
- ✓ Lists concrete advocacy and communication steps, including the preparation of a strategy, the completion of events at various levels and the engagement of all relevant entities and networks to raise awareness, mobilise resources and promote implementation.
- ✓ Presents estimated costs over the life of the plan by sector, including a clearly defined scale up of government contribution and planning figures by sectors; presents the allocated budget of MSNP I and proposes steps to track finances (including off- and on-budget contributions from donors).
- ✓ Proposes the development of a capacity-building master plan to develop planning and implementation capacities at all levels of the government, as well as specific capacity-building actions for nutrition-specific activities.
- ✓ Includes a comprehensive set of impact, outcome and output indicators with data sources, as well as activities to strengthen existing routine information systems that are used to track them.

## Key recommendations

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

- Reduction of child and adult overweight/obesity is an expected impact of the plan, but few proposed actions appear to address it directly.
  - **Recommendation:** Review the proposed behaviour change communication activities to see whether they can include a diet-related, non-communicable disease component, and identify whether there are certain regions or populations that suffer disproportionately from overweight/obesity and train local champions accordingly.
- The plan does not provide details on risks to successful implementation of the plan.

→ **Recommendation:** For each lesson learned enumerated in the situational analysis, review relevant activities to ensure they include novel approaches to address the problems; and assess any other potential risks (and methods for mitigating them) during coordination meetings.

#### 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 could affect the plan's content, strategic orientation or responsibilities—that may arise during implementation.

#### Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

— While there are missing aspects within this area of the Checklist, such as not having a financial gap estimate, most of these are noted in the plan narrative with specific actions to address them.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure the actions and solutions proposed in the plan regarding the costing and budgetary shortfalls are carried out, as feasible.

#### Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

— Challenges and lessons learned from the first MSNP are included in the plan, but could have been elaborated on more systematically and specifically. For example, the plan notes lack of ownership and limited capacity as hindering progress. However, it does not provide sufficient detail nor proposed responses to address these challenges in the MSNP II's implementation.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure clarity on potential solutions from gaps or challenges noted from MSNP I so they can be effectively addressed during implementation. A matrix presenting identified gaps and corresponding responses would be useful for the next iteration of the plan.

— Some key activities do not include annual targets and timelines for annual operational planning.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure that expectations and deadlines for each activity of the annual planning process are communicated in implementation guidance for planners at all levels of government. In a future iteration of plan, consider including an overview of the process.

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

— The plan does not describe priorities for either applied or operational research although the experiences and challenges observed during the MSNP I could inform those priorities. While IFPRI is a strategic partner and Nepal's Health Research Council is a member of the National Coordination Committee, other subject matter research institutions are not involved.

→ **Recommendation:** Identify research partners who could support the national steering and/or coordination groups in the formulation and implementation of research priorities arising from the experience from the implementation of MSNP I or start-up of MSNP II. Future iterations of the plan could discuss this information in the main planning document.

### 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.

Nepal's plan notes inclusiveness and gender equity as one of its crosscutting principles, and includes planned actions to improve some gender dimensions of nutrition. However, there is an absence of details on how gender will be mainstreamed across plan 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. Building the gender-related analysis already included in the plan, 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 Nepal context (e.g. exploring traditional gender roles/norms and how these may influence nutrition).
- **Planned actions:** While the plan provides activities on women's entrepreneurship, shifting harmful gender norms and a gender-sensitive continuum of care, ensure that all relevant planned actions consider the unique circumstances of different populations based on the situational assessment, including actions that address underlying inequities, 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 Nepal'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. 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 Nepal'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. 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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