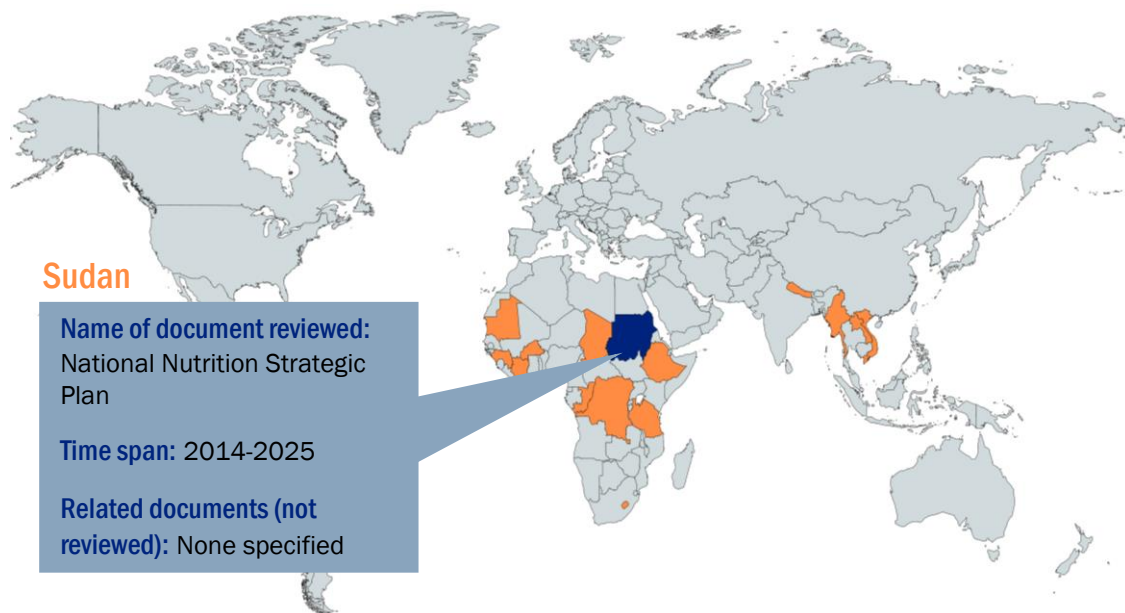


# National Nutrition Plan Assessment: Sudan

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 Sudan, 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

Sudan’s *National Nutrition Strategic Plan 2014-2025* was developed shortly prior to Sudan joining the SUN Movement in 2014. Led by the Federal Ministry of Health, the plan aims to improve the nutritional status of the population throughout the life cycle. Proposed activities include nutrition-specific activities (e.g. management of acute malnutrition and promotion of infant and young child feeding practices), nutrition-sensitive interventions (e.g. promotion of home-based agriculture and expansion of social protection programmes) and governance initiatives to improve policy and financing for nutrition.

## Key strengths

Sudan's plan is concise with a clear focus on its overall goals of reducing wasting and stunting. While this plan is still active, it should be noted that it was developed in 2014, prior to Sudan joining the SUN Movement and prior to release of the SUN Checklist. Below are a few key strengths:

- ✓ Describes key nutritional indicators among children under five and women of reproductive age in the situational analysis.
- ✓ Devotes an entire strategic objective to improving emergency preparedness.
- ✓ Presents cost estimates for each proposed strategic objective, including multisectoral and cross-cutting actions (e.g. overall plan coordination, monitoring and evaluation and capacity building).

## Key recommendations

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

- Although impact and outcome targets align well with World Health Assembly targets, they do not clearly state the baseline values or endline targets, which will make it challenging to assess progress of this plan.
  - **Recommendation:** Use available data (e.g. from Demographic and Health Surveys or MICS) to add baseline values and endline targets, taking into account level of progress made in the past.
- The strategic objectives are presented inconsistently across the action plan introduction, logframe and cost estimates, which makes it challenging to link activities and costs to the objectives.
  - **Recommendation:** Ensure clear understanding and documentation of the activities and costs associated with each strategic objective. In future plan iterations or related planning documents, review the strategic objectives to ensure consistency and alignment through each section.
- The plan provides a useful situational analysis, though could add greater detail in terms of disaggregating the situation at subnational level, including differentiation of vulnerable groups and the diversity of challenges and geographies in the country.
  - **Recommendation:** Provide increased clarity on which populations and regions will be prioritised for the various plan interventions, with an accompanying rationale for the targeting strategy.

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

- While the plan presents strong proposals for establishing high-level coordination mechanisms and enhancing partner collaboration for delivery of the plan, detail is lacking on the composition of the national-level coordinating body and which subnational entities/partners will be responsible for implementation of the proposed actions.
  - **Recommendation:** Consider developing terms of reference for national, state and local coordinating bodies that describe roles, responsibilities and timelines for implementing activities described in the log frame.
- Although the plan (led by the Federal Ministry of Health) acknowledges the value of a multisectoral approach, it focuses predominantly on the health sector with limited mention of other sectors or nutrition-sensitive actions. In addition, while the plan notes the Ministry will lead in advocacy

between other line ministries to ensure coordinated action and inclusion of nutrition-related programming in sectoral budgets, no specific activities are included for how this will be executed.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure engagement of all relevant nutrition-related sectors in future/current planning to support alignment of multisectoral nutrition actions. As well, consider developing an advocacy and communications strategy to support awareness raising on multisectoral nutrition with key stakeholders at multiple levels (e.g. politicians, community leaders, plan beneficiaries) and to further facilitate buy-in, resource mobilisation and uptake of coordinated nutrition actions.

### Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

— While each strategic objective is costed in the plan, it does not present existing and expected levels of funding for the proposed activities or an estimation of the financial gap.

→ **Recommendation:** Consider conducting a budget analysis (including government and development partner contributions) to assess current and planned levels of spending and the financial gap. In the event of significant shortfalls, issue guidance to national and subnational bodies responsible for developing plan budgets on how to prioritise interventions or populations, using available data and transparent criteria. If possible, conduct the budget analysis periodically during implementation to determine whether advocacy to increase nutrition spending has worked.

### Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

— The plan does not present responsible agencies and collaborating partners for each action or clear timelines for implementation.

→ **Recommendation:** Develop a matrix that states the lead and supporting organisations as well as timelines for each activity to guide annual operational planning and ensure accountability.

— The situational analysis highlights capacity constraints as a potential challenge to implementation and capacity development is included as a plan activity. However, the plan does not include details on how this activity will be carried out.

→ **Recommendation:** Consult with capacity development partners and training institutions named in the plan to develop clear aims and activities for capacity development and agree on the responsible partners/institutions. In future iterations of the plan, this can be documented and included in the plan costing. If not already done, a capacity needs assessment across all sectors involved in plan implementation could also be conducted to identify and prioritise areas of focus.

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

— Several proposed activities in the log frame do not have clear outcome and process indicators.

→ **Recommendation:** Ensure that each of the activities has at least one process indicator that will summarise whether it is being implemented as planned and revise the qualitative indicators (e.g. for nutrition information systems, school programmes) to have more concrete definitions of success. Doing so may require additional consultation with non-health sectors.

## 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 equity in general is mentioned as one of the guiding principles of Sudan's plan, there is minimal discussion of gender in relation to nutrition and an absence of details on how gender and broader equity will be considered and 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:** A gender assessment could be conducted as part of an updated analysis to fully assess gender-related dimensions of nutrition in the Sudan 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:** 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, 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.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Selection of appropriate gender-related indicators should be based on Sudan'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 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 Sudan'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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