

National Nutrition Plan Review: Pakistan

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 and 2020, at the request of the SMS, the Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+) project undertook a systematic review of 26 countries’ multisectoral national nutrition plans. This brief summarises select strengths and suggested areas for improvement with recommendations for Pakistan, 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. Where relevant, specific suggestions for increasing gender sensitivity for the plan are also included (see MQSUN+’s [gender brief](#) for more information).

Pakistan

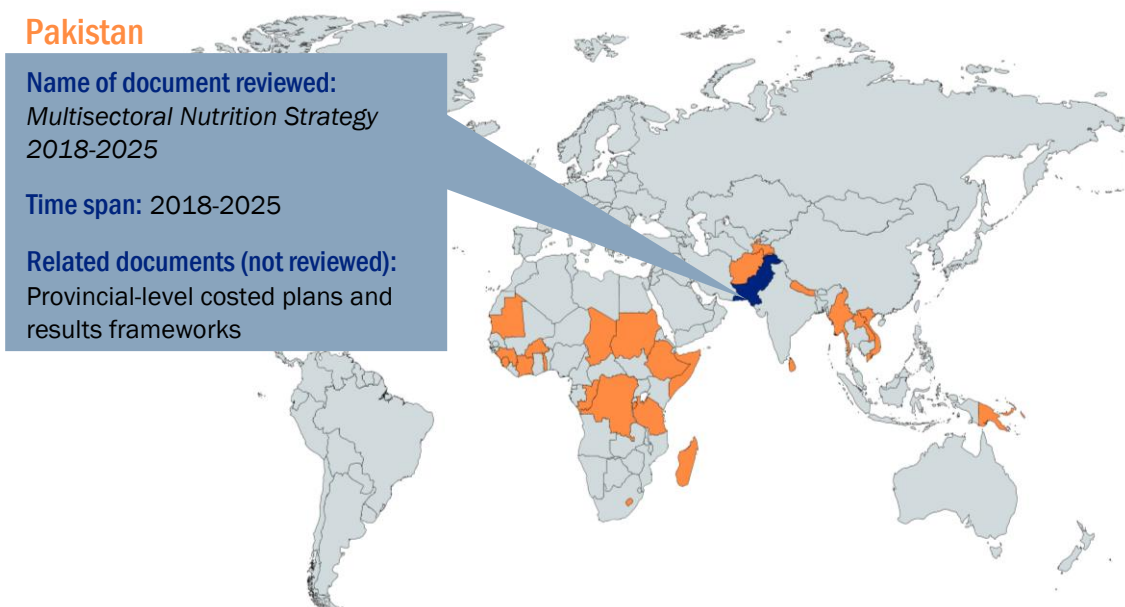
Name of document reviewed:

Multisectoral Nutrition Strategy 2018-2025

Time span: 2018-2025

Related documents (not reviewed):

Provincial-level costed plans and results frameworks



Overview

To create new opportunities and change how nutrition is approached at national, local and individual levels, Pakistan developed the *Multisectoral Nutrition Strategy 2018-2025* to give strategic direction to nutrition-specific and -sensitive interventions in the country. Developed alongside provincial-level plans, it seeks to achieve this through eight strategic objectives: (1) develop an enabling federal policy environment; (2) provide strategic leadership / guidance for nutrition-specific provincial programmes; (3) contribute to building capacity for federal and provincial programmes; (4) develop national communications, advocacy and public education; (5) ensure application of nutrition lens along with research and development; (6) develop a national monitoring database and provide technical support to provincial monitoring; (7) provide critical nutrition services in humanitarian emergencies; and (8) strengthen the platform for coordination and collaboration.

Key strengths

The plan seeks to provide an overarching programme, coordination and governance framework for multisectoral strategies and efforts at the provincial level within the country and has been developed alongside provincial-level costed plans and results frameworks. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- Notes that both national- and subnational-level consultations contributed to the development of the plan, which is reflected in the detailed description of governance arrangements and federal and provincial linkages.
- Includes actions that are in line with global evidence, that address implementation bottlenecks related to equity, financial resource sustainability and planning, that address the gender dimensions of nutrition and integrate gender responsiveness in annual planning across all sectors.
- Describes the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in a thorough manner.
- Includes targets in line with most World Health Assembly (WHA) nutrition-related targets, modified appropriately for what is feasible yet ambitious within the context of Pakistan.
- Covers important areas, such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E), advocacy and communications, capacity building, coordination as well as developing research capacities.

Key recommendations

Area 1: Situational analysis and policy and programming review

- Whilst the situational analysis provides information on some potential drivers of malnutrition, such as breastfeeding, childhood illness and food insecurity, there is little or no mention of other important drivers (such as access to improved sources of drinking water and sanitation facilities, and quality of diets). As well, there are no disaggregated statistics on the nutrition situation across population groups other than stunting by sex.
 - **Recommendation:** In order to facilitate prioritisation and improve targeting of interventions, ensure the use of disaggregated data for decision making. For the next iteration of the plan, consider including a more in-depth examination of determinants of malnutrition in a systematic fashion and how nutrition determinants and outcomes vary across populations (ethnic, socio-economic, geographic etc.). Where situational analyses are included within provincial plans, the national-level situational analysis could draw upon these to bring out context-specific nutrition priorities and population groups/geographical areas needing a particular focus.
- There is a broad range of existing programmes and policies in place in Pakistan, which are highly relevant or explicitly targeted to improving nutrition outcomes. How these could be improved or scaled up is not explored in any depth in the plan, and there is no systematic identification of related gaps, support needs or risks and potential mitigation measures.
 - **Recommendation:** Describe existing programmes and policies relevant to nutrition across sectors and outline existing or potential synergies, points of divergence or gaps as well as support needed to achieve scale up and manage or mitigate risks.
- The plan does not identify key risks to its implementation or mitigation strategies to address these risks.

→ **Recommendation:** Identify risk that would impact plan implementation and develop plans to mitigate these risks drawing on details from provincial plans, where available. Additionally, ensure approaches, actions and coordination mechanisms are in place to respond to emergency needs.

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

- Whilst the consultative process of developing the plan is well described, a list of specific organisations and individuals involved is not provided—leaving it somewhat unclear which or how many ministries, agencies or organisations ultimately contributed to the plan.
 - **Recommendation:** In future iterations of the plan, add further documentation on which stakeholders were involved. 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.
- The plan does not explicitly mention whether any formal high-level political or local authority endorsement (e.g. national assembly) has been achieved or will be pursued.
 - **Recommendation:** Given the start year of this plan is 2018, it is presumed that a formal endorsement process has taken place. In the next iteration of the plan, ensure the front page is signed by a high-level government representative, and if possible, include high-level signatories from across sectors to formally document the commitment of the various sectors and the highest level of government. In addition, seek and document endorsement at local authority level to facilitate coherence and alignment across central and provincial levels.

Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

- Whilst the plan indicates that almost every province has initiated well-costed multisectoral programmes, it does not indicate current levels of financing and an estimate of the financial gap.
 - **Recommendation:** Develop or bring together provincial-level plan estimates of currently available funding to provide an overall assessment of the cost of the plan, which may be used to facilitate resource mobilisation and advocacy at the national level. In the event of a substantial funding gap, ensure a plan is in place to prioritise interventions or populations, using available data and transparent criteria.
- Although the plan mentions the compilation of nutrition plans and budgets to inform resource targeting, it does not provide additional details on tracking financing of the plan.
 - **Recommendation:** Review existing sectoral and provincial level financial tracking mechanisms, and if a sufficient tracking system is not already in place, assess the feasibility of adapting or developing a financial tracking system—drawing on any existing provincial tracking mechanisms—that includes both on- and off-budget funding for planned activities, as well as allocations and expenditures to make disbursement decisions more transparent.

Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

- Whilst the plan includes a matrix of general sectoral roles and responsibilities, and the linkages between the provincial and federal strategies and stakeholders are mentioned, the roles of the different sectors and the relationships between them are not defined.
 - **Recommendation:** Describe the roles and responsibilities of government and other partners, including lead and contributing agencies for each action at both national and provincial level—drawing on details provided in provincial plans—and define linkages and accountability across

sectors and administrative levels. Additionally, consider bringing provincial-level plans together into a federal-level matrix or results framework to better reflect points of convergence and divergence and allow for a more operational approach to supporting provincial planning/implementation.

- Whilst capacity needs linked to particular activities are mentioned in several places throughout the plan, it is unclear whether they are based on a systematic assessment of existing capacity or what concrete steps are envisioned to address capacity gaps, including timeline, responsible agencies and funding for these activities.

→ **Recommendation:** If not already done, consider further assessing and clearly elaborating the capacity needs, and link actions within the plan to existing capacity. Where gaps are identified, outline a set of capacity-building measures with defined milestones, timeframes, funding sources and responsible parties. In the assessment, consider also identifying unique needs or potential barriers to equitable participation amongst men and women and incorporating measures to address these considerations in capacity-building actions.

Area 5: Monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review

- The plan explicitly states that M&E is to take place through policy frameworks chartered by each province. As such, the plan does not provide nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive results, outputs, outcomes and impacts or annual targets.

→ **Recommendation:** If not already done, review regional plans and collate, where relevant and feasible, into a national M&E framework, including baseline figures, results, outputs, outcomes and impacts with annual targets, the baseline level of reach; and establish realistic targets for the life of the plan, annually if possible (to assist in decision making during annual reviews). In addition, advocate for the collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data across all provinces to inform decision making.

Moving forward

These recommendations can be considered and applied to the ongoing implementation process for Pakistan's multisectoral nutrition strategy, as relevant and feasible, or considered in the planning process for the next iteration of the strategy as indicated. As part of the ongoing implementation, one area of focus could be to assess the content of existing provincial plans and points of convergence/divergence and bring them together into a national-level matrix or results framework. Such a document could be used for more targeted national-level M&E and link provincial-level plans to expected national nutrition targets. As well, if feasible, this information could be documented into sector-specific operational plans to better target and monitor the nutrition actions set out in the plan. For additional information on how closely this plan aligns with the SUN Checklist, please contact SMS to request a full copy of the plan review.

For more practical guidance on multisectoral nutrition planning, see the resources included in the [SUN Checklist](#) and refer to the [forthcoming multisectoral nutrition planning toolkit from MQSUN+](#)

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+

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Acknowledgements

This brief was compiled by PATH under MQSUN+. Contributors included Rebecca Brown, Chris Coffey, Amanda Coile, Carrie Hemminger and Jolene Wun.

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