

National Nutrition Plan Review: Tajikistan

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, according to the criteria in the SUN Checklist. This brief summarises select strengths and suggested areas for improvement with recommendations for Tajikistan, 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).

Tajikistan

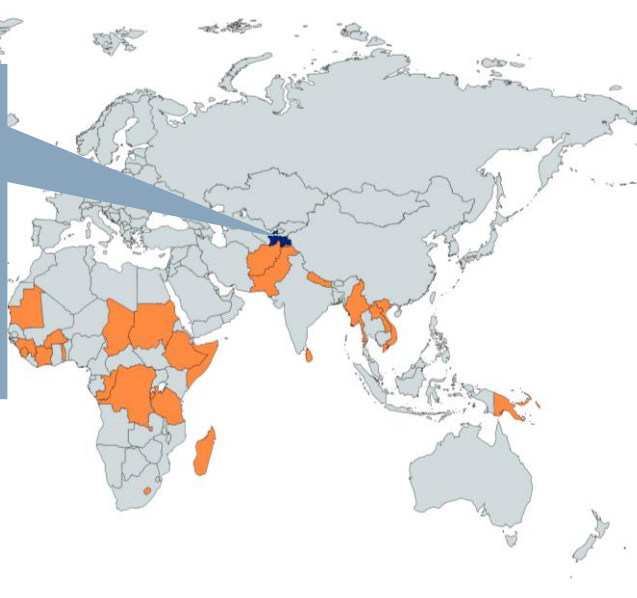
Name of document reviewed:

Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (Jan. 2020 draft) and Common Results Framework

Time span: 2020-2025

Related documents (not reviewed):

Costing; Capacity Building Assessment; and M&E Framework (all forthcoming)



Overview

Tajikistan’s *Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan* is Tajikistan’s first multisectoral nutrition plan and serves as the operational plan for its *Common Results Framework*, which was developed in 2017. At the time of review, the document was in draft form. The plan aims to improve the nutritional status of the population through multisectoral actions through four strategic objectives: (1) creating an enabling policy environment; (2) improving the quality and coverage of nutrition-specific interventions; (3) improving the quality and coverage of nutrition-sensitive interventions; and (4) establishing a mechanism for collection, analysis, and comparison of nutrition information.

Key strengths

The plan highlights strong linkages across sectors and provides clear multisectoral drivers of nutrition in the country. Below are a few key strengths that emerged from the review:

- Includes expected results that are aligned with the World Health Assembly nutrition indicators and are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).
- Provides a comprehensive review of existing programmes and key gaps of each sector implicated in the plan, and recommends actions clearly linked to addressing those identified issues.
- Proposes actions that are clear, highly specific, based on the identified existing capacity and capacity needs, and in most cases, assigns clear responsibilities to the involved stakeholders.
- Includes capacity-building plans that are detailed, are rooted in the capacity assessment results and recognise the need to build both technical and governance skills.

Key recommendations

Area 1: Situational analysis and policy and programming review

- Whilst the plan clearly presents and discusses nutrition determinants throughout the document, limited data is provided on regions or groups that are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition in the country.
 - **Recommendation:** In order to facilitate prioritisation and improve targeting of interventions, ensure the use of disaggregated data for decision making, and if necessary, conduct further assessment of nutritional status by sex, region, ethnic group, urban/rural, and/or other groups suspected to be vulnerable in the country to facilitate planning.
- Although the plan proposes some actions to address gender-related determinants of nutrition, it does not explicitly describe how the gender dimensions of nutrition would be addressed across plan activities.
 - **Recommendation:** Consider a mechanism or responsible entity to support addressing equitable participation of women, men, boys and girls across activities (as relevant) as well as the consideration and mitigation of unintended consequences or potential inequities that may arise from existing gender norms. Drawing from other countries' plans, this could potentially be addressed through including a gender focal point in the plan's multisectoral coordination groups or assign the Ministry of Women/Gender to support the incorporation of gender consideration across all nutrition-sensitive activities.
- Whilst the plan includes elements of emergency/disaster response, there is scope for further integration of preparedness and actions to address nutrition and food security emergencies across the country.
 - **Recommendation:** Consider developing additional activities to support emergency preparedness, including ensuring plans and coordination mechanisms are in place to facilitate the integration of actions and messaging around food security and nutrition in emergencies at all levels.

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

- While there are some advocacy-related activities included throughout the plan, there is no clear plan laid out around advocacy and communications to support the rollout and implementation. Additionally, the plan has not yet been formally validated at a high-level, as acknowledged in the planning document.
 - **Recommendation:** Consider developing a corresponding advocacy and communication strategy or identifying actions to mobilise nutrition champions at multiple levels (e.g. politicians, sector representatives, community leaders and members) to facilitate buy-in and uptake of plan activities, as well as resource mobilisation. Ensure that the plan is officially validated at a high level, and if possible, signed by the Ministers of the various sectors responsible for its implementation.

Area 3: Costs and budgetary framework

- Although costing of the plan is proposed as a future activity, the plan does not discuss the estimation of baseline financing levels or calculation of financial gaps.
 - **Recommendation:** When conducting the costing exercise, include a financial gap analysis based on available budget data and off-budget sources of funding. In the event of a shortfall, consider developing a plan for mobilising additional resources, and develop criteria for prioritising target groups, geographic areas and/or interventions, using available data and transparent criteria.

Area 4: Implementation and management arrangements

- The plan lays out potential coordination structures and mechanisms, including the roles of key stakeholders. However, it is noted that these mechanisms need to be agreed and established prior to plan implementation.
 - **Recommendation:** Agree on and establish mechanisms for multisectoral coordination of the plan, including defining responsible and supporting agencies for each action where this information is missing and agreeing on clear stakeholder roles and responsibilities to ensure effective rollout of the plan, coordinated action and joint targeting of interventions, where appropriate, across sectoral activities.
- Whilst capacity-building actions are clearly defined with timelines and responsible parties, considerations to facilitate equitable participation and address gender-related dynamics are not specified.
 - **Recommendation:** In planning for specific capacity-building actions, 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.

Area 5: Monitoring, evaluation (M&E), operational research and review

- The plan does not indicate planned actions to strengthen routine and survey nutrition information systems or the types of analyses that will be conducted. A separate M&E plan is forthcoming to support the plan.

- → **Recommendation:** Conduct an assessment of the data quality and completeness of current routine information systems and include measures to address gaps in the M&E plan and analyse the information. In addition, ensure that M&E systems have the capacity to collect and analyse data by sex and age to inform decision-making.

Moving forward

These recommendations can be considered and applied, as feasible and relevant, to the inception phase and implementation process for Tajikistan’s multisectoral nutrition plan. In addition, the Box on the following page indicates more detailed and prioritised key next steps based on the broader MQSUN+ support to Tajikistan in the development of this 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+](#)

Recommended next steps from MQSUN+ technical assistance to Tajikistan

MQSUN+ supported the development of the Tajikistan national plan under a separate technical assistance (TA) assignment. For the purpose of this systematic review, the reviewers were not involved in the plan development, and hence, the brief provides recommendations based on the independent review alone. However, given that MQSUN+ had developed a separate handover note for Tajikistan following the country TA, the specific recommended next steps from the TA are included here for reference (see handover note for additional context):

- Finalise the updated common results framework (CRF) in government format in Russian and Tajik versions (based on the English Version updated by MQSUN+).
- Define responsible and supporting agencies for each action where this information is missing.
- Add the detailed chapters to the updated CRF once it is validated/approved by the government.
- Develop and finalise the Multisectoral Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, based on the suggested framework in the detailed plan. This should be done through the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) and allow the contribution of all sectors. It should consider how sectoral monitoring systems currently function, how they can adapt / include the necessary nutrition-related information in regular monitoring activities, as well as the use of an existing platform or creation of a new platform for multisectoral data collection. The development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan can be used as an opportunity to define processes for operational research and documentation and dissemination of good practices and lessons learned.
- Define governance and coordination arrangements and accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the plan at national and subnational levels. A potential structure for this has been proposed in the detailed plan (Governance Chapter), and this requires further review, adaptation and validation by the SUN Focal Point and MSP; consider the establishment / re-launching of a high-level council for nutrition (Prime Minister or Presidential Office) and location of the SUN Focal Point at this level.
- Initiate discussions around subnational governance arrangements, onward planning at implementation and coordination.
- Consider the establishment / launching of SUN Networks (e.g. civil society, donor, UN, academia, business) to support the MSP and engage and mobilise different groups of stakeholders at national and sub-national level in identifying resources and putting the plan into action.
- Define arrangements for a full costing and financial gap analysis of the plan, including agreeing on a timeframe, work plan, team composition and orientation / training required, as well as identifying a source of funding for the costing exercise. Execute the costing and financial gap analysis.
- Establish a financial tracking mechanism, which tracks financial allocation, releases and expenditures (both public and donor sources) for all of the plan’s proposed actions, based on existing tracking systems within sectors and amongst partners.

Recommended next steps from MQSUN+ technical assistance to Tajikistan, cont'd

- Launch the plan at a high-level event, which includes parliamentarians and donors, and establish buy-in and commitment from all stakeholders. As part of this, arrange a resource mobilisation round table to present and solicit funding commitments for core priorities.
- Launch the plan through sectoral/ministerial events and multi-stakeholder fora, including the MSP and the Donor Coordination Council.
- Have government issue relevant decrees/orders which mandate ministries to adopt, implement and monitor the plan, integrating relevant elements into their own sectoral policies and plans.
- Raise awareness and increase capacity in nutrition. These are both top priorities which need to be addressed in relation to nutrition, from the very senior political level down to local administrative levels. When rolling out the plan at subnational level, it will be very important that management and administrative staff are included in training / awareness-raising initiatives to ensure an understanding of the importance of nutrition when making decisions about budgeting/programmatic priorities. A core focus across the different sectoral chapters in the plan has been on building awareness and capacity in nutrition, and the plan highlights the various thematic areas to be included in training and awareness-raising resources/sessions and proposes ambitious training schemes across the health, agriculture, education, social protection and water, sanitation and hygiene sectors.

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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Acknowledgements

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