

Action brief

Enabling policy environment thanks to fostered coordination

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Country: Nigeria
Topics: Coordination of action through improved functional capacities
Sub-topics: Strengthening capacity to better coordinate with sectors or groups

Date: 2024



Overview



To ensure the actual implementation of policies and interventions aimed at ending malnutrition, nutrition must be placed above the sector level. To this end, Nigeria has established a coordinated system to ensure that nutrition is tackled across sectors and at national and local levels, as described in the National Multi-Sectoral Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition, which led to the creation of the National Council on Nutrition in Nigeria.



Objectives of the action brief

The objective of this action brief is to:

- demonstrate the importance and feasibility of working in a multisectoral setting to increase efficiency
- show how coordinating bodies can be adapted at national and subnational levels



SDGs





Period covered

2014 to 2023



What action was taken?

The nutrition coordination and governance structure in Nigeria has undergone significant changes over the years. Previously, nutrition interventions were largely vertical, led by various government agencies, non-governmental organizations and development partners implementing separate and often-overlapping programmes. This led to fragmentation and inefficiencies in the delivery of nutrition services.

Over the past decade, Nigeria has significantly strengthened its nutrition coordination and governance structures, including at subnational levels. The country joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement in 2011 and committed to improving nutrition outcomes by implementing evidence-based interventions and strengthening nutrition governance and coordination.

Nigeria developed a National Strategic Plan of Action for Nutrition (NSPAN I for 2016–2020 and NSPAN II for 2021–2025), establishing a comprehensive institutional arrangement and legal framework for implementing food and nutrition programmes in the country. The NSPAN outlined objectives focused on targets, actions and stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations and development partners. The objectives also included the establishment of coordination bodies across different levels. Effectively created in 2017, the National Council on Nutrition is the highest interministerial decision-making body on nutrition in Nigeria. The Vice-President of Nigeria chairs the council, which includes representation from various government ministries, including the ministries of Health, Agriculture, Education, Budget and Economic Planning, Women Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, and Finance.





Other coordinating bodies also have been created, including representatives of relevant government ministries, departments, agencies, development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector. They provide strategic guidance and direction for implementing food and nutrition interventions in their respective localities.

At the national level, for example, the National Committee on Food and Nutrition was created within the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, while the National Nutrition Technical Working Group was created under the Ministry of Health and the State Committee on Food and Nutrition was created under the State Budget and Planning Office. Local government committees on food and nutrition and ward committees are established at the subnational level. Finally, the Food and Nutrition Technical Committee is responsible for providing technical support to the national, state and local food and nutrition councils in implementing policies and programmes.

In addition, a national nutrition budget line was created in 2016 to increase the availability of resources for nutrition programmes. It is used to fund nutrition interventions across various government ministries, including health, education and agriculture. Between 2022 and 2023, nutrition departments were created in several ministries.

The strengths of these institutional arrangements include the following:

- The multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach, in which the coordination mechanism involves various

sectors and stakeholders, ensures that a range of perspectives and expertise is considered and used in designing and implementing food and nutrition policies and programmes.

- Clear roles and responsibilities help avoid the duplication of efforts and ensure effective coordination.
- Accountability lines – with each structure accountable to the next higher structure – ensure that all actors are responsible for their actions and decisions.
- Participation in the coordination mechanism by traditional and community leaders, men's and women's groups and youth organizations ensures that community-level perspectives are incorporated into the design and implementation of food and nutrition policies and programmes.
- A data-driven approach, in which the mechanism emphasizes the use of data and evidence in decision-making, helps ensure that policies and programmes are based on evidence and targeted at those who need them the most.

Overall, strengthening the coordination mechanism for food and nutrition policy in Nigeria requires a multi-pronged approach, involving a range of stakeholders and actions at various levels, to ensure the effective implementation of policies and programmes that improve the nutritional status of Nigerians and reduce hunger and malnutrition.



What would the country do differently?

However, significant challenges remain in the nutrition coordination and governance structure in Nigeria, including limited funding for nutrition programmes, weak implementation of policies and programmes, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation of nutrition interventions.

Several steps could be taken to improve the implementation of the nutrition coordination system:

- Increase financial investments to ensure the functionality of the coordination mechanism, as it requires significant financial and human resources that

are not always available, particularly at subnational levels.

- Establish a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system to effectively measure progress towards outcomes.
- Engage long-term political will. Political commitment has been sometimes limited, with changing governments and leadership in departments and ministries, affecting the allocation of resources and support for implementing the policies and programmes.



Adaptation and applicability

To adapt these efforts, it will be important to:

- **Acquire sufficient funding, ensuring the necessary financial resources for the structure at national and subnational levels.**
- **Strengthen the capacities of national and subnational structures by, for example, providing training and technical assistance, strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems and promoting learning and the sharing of knowledge.**
- **Ensure an inclusive process – particularly the fair representation of marginalized populations, such as women, children and persons with disabilities.**
- **Strengthen partnerships based on shared objectives and effective collaborations with development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector.**
- **Scale up nutrition structures by, for example, upgrading nutrition divisions or units to nutrition departments at subnational levels to increase visibility for nutrition services.**



Next steps

The next steps include:

- Integrate a nutrition-specific budget to tackle malnutrition.
- Increase the number of ministries that include a nutrition department.



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Further information

- On the adoption of the nutrition plan
- On the Partnership for Improving Nigeria Nutrition System project led by CSA Nigeria
- The national policy on food and nutrition in Nigeria (NPFN)-2016
- National multi-sectoral plan of action for food and nutrition (NMPFAN) 2021-2025

Scaling Up
NUTRITION

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