

Introduction to the NIPN approach

The introduction sets out the **NIPN approach**, including the **NIPN structure**, the **sub-steps in its operational cycle** and its **core principles** and **scope**.

It also describes the **data-informed dialogue** between policy makers and data analysts that is at the heart of the NIPN approach.

1.1 - NIPN approach

At country level, **NIPN is rooted within existing institutions and national multisectoral coordination systems for nutrition**. From the analysis of available and shared data, it generates evidence that is used by (sub-)national stakeholders for developing policy, designing programmes and allocating investments, through the **NIPN operational cycle** consisting of three elements that constantly revolve and feed into each other:

- **Question formulation** based on government priorities;
- **Analysis of data** to inform the questions;
- **Communication of the findings** back to government.

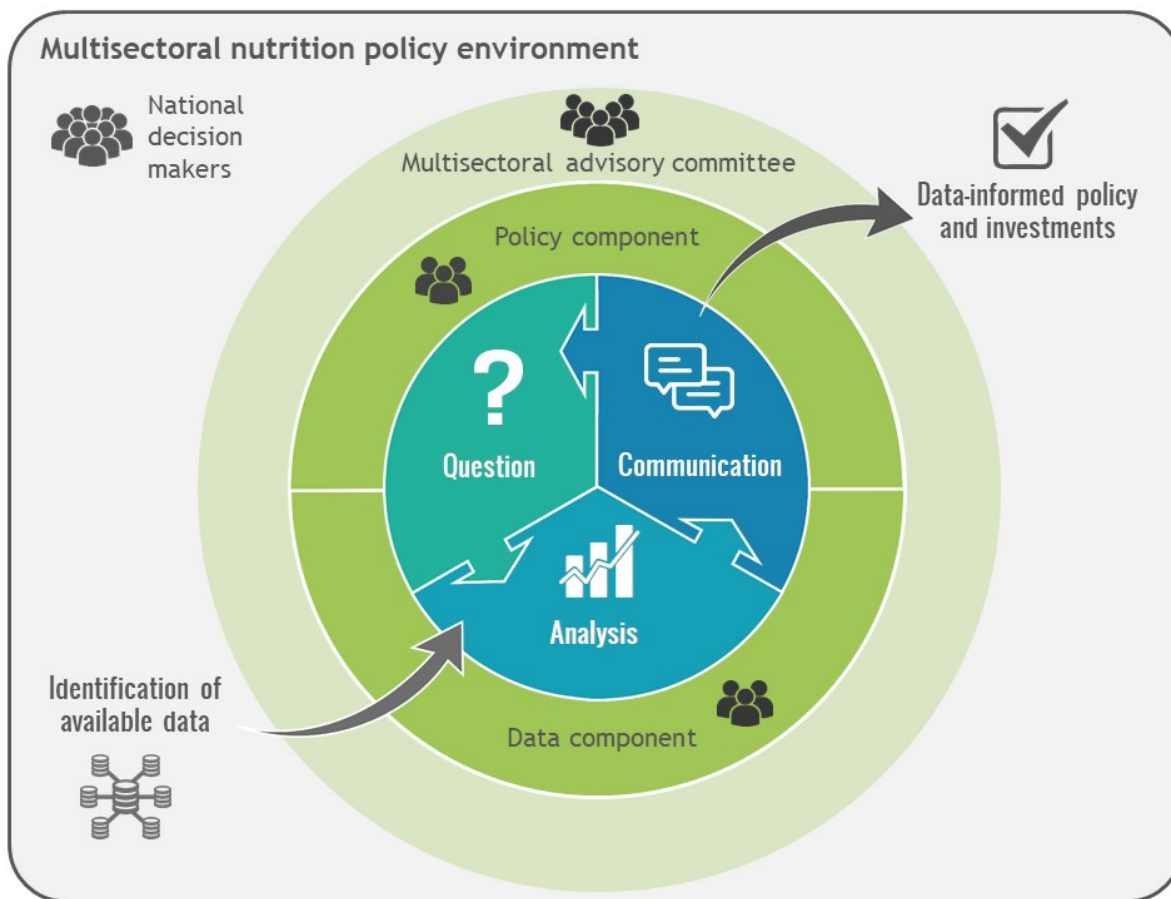
The NIPN operational cycle is supported by the national **NIPN structure** made up of:

- Actors within a **policy component** which convenes and facilitates a multisectoral advisory committee, playing a key role in policy question formulation, interpretation of the results of data analysis and communication of findings.
- Actors within a **data component** that collates multisectoral data in a central repository and analyses the data.

Both components are hosted by national organisations. The **NIPN country team**, comprising staff from the national host organisations, staff on contract and technical advisors, is embedded within these two components and is responsible for implementing the NIPN approach.

The **NIPN Multisectoral Advisory Committee** guides the country team, validates its work, and ensures information flows between NIPN and the national multisectoral mechanisms for nutrition.

NIPN approach

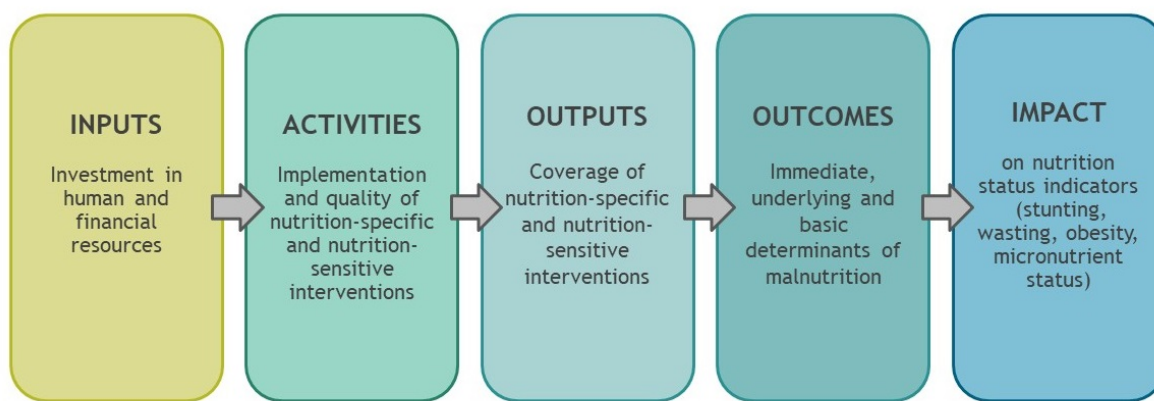


1.2 - NIPN core principles

The NIPN core principles are embedded within the four elements of the NIPN approach:

- **NIPN is country-owned.** It strengthens systemic, organizational and individual capacity and is rooted within existing national institutions and the existing multisectoral coordination system for nutrition.
- **NIPN is country-driven.** It is led by a country's priorities in relation to nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive policies and programmes.
- **NIPN uses existing data shared by multisectoral sources** for national and sub-national level analysis. As such, it improves the accessibility of nutrition-relevant data from multiple datasets and makes better use of underutilised data. NIPN does not collect new data.
- **NIPN communicates clear and actionable messages in a timely manner to influence policy makers.** It tells a story that traces the impact pathway as illustrated in the visual below: how inputs (investments, human resources) are leading to outputs (intervention coverage) and translate into changes in outcomes (determinants of nutrition), which ultimately have an impact on indicators of nutrition status such as stunting.

The nutrition impact pathway: a story to tell



1.3 - NIPN dialogue

Dialogue is fundamental to the NIPN approach. The success of NIPN relies on dynamic interaction between sectors, departments or institutions that usually do not speak to each other, but are encouraged through the NIPN approach to exchange and discuss the meaning of data and statistics for nutrition-relevant decisions.

Dialogue between the policy actors, concerned with high-level policy and investment decisions related to nutrition, and the data actors, concerned with data management and analysis, is at the core of the NIPN operational cycle of Question-Analysis-Communication.

Dialogue between the NIPN country team and the broader national multisectoral nutrition coordination system, mainly through the Multisectoral Advisory Committee, ensures that the policy demand is articulated and relevant, and that the findings of data analyses are communicated in a clear, actionable and timely fashion.

The process of this dialogue should be continuous and dynamic, and therefore the sub-steps of the NIPN operational cycle do not follow a prescribed sequence.

1.4 - Sub-steps in the NIPN operational cycle

The NIPN operational cycle can be split into sub-steps to facilitate implementation of the approach.

To support policy-relevant **Question Formulation**, the actors in the NIPN policy component may wish to undertake the following 4-step process (**section 2.1**) in consultation with multisectoral stakeholders:

- Identify broad nutrition policy demand and initial questions (**section 2.2**)
- Formulate relevant policy questions (**section 2.3**)
- Refine the questions so they are answerable with available data and capacity (**section 2.4**)
- Finalise and validate questions (**section 2.5**)

To support **Data Analysis**, the actors in the NIPN data component may, in close collaboration with the policy actors and experts representing different sectors:

- Map the available nutrition-relevant data and data sources ([section 3.1](#))
- Manage selected data in a consistent way ([section 3.2](#))
- Assess data quality and decide if they are of sufficient quality to be used in analysis to respond to particular policy questions ([section 3.3](#))
- Analyse the data with appropriate methodologies and interpret the data and available information ([section 3.4](#))
- Use a sub-national nutrition dashboard as a rapid means to initiate a policy dialogue ([section 3.5](#)) and other analysis methods ([section 3.6](#))

Finally, once the results of data analyses are available, the actors of both the data and policy component, in close collaboration with national stakeholders, may implement the communication plan ([section 4.1](#)), taking practical considerations into account to **Communicate the Findings** to policy makers ([section 4.2](#)):

- Design simple, clear and actionable messages based on the findings.
- Tell a story based on the results of the analyses.
- Disseminate these messages in a timely manner and through the appropriate channels, to influence the right policy makers.

The Guidance Notes serve to take the actors in the policy and data components through these sub-steps, as illustrated below.

Sub-steps of the NIPN operational cycle and guidance notes

[Watch the video.](#)

1.5 - NIPN scope

NIPN wants to make better use of underutilised national and sub-national data; for instance to track progress and regional disparities in nutrition outcomes and determinants, in coverage of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes, as well as in investments in these programmes. **Such analyses have a great value add to inform nutrition policy and investment decisions.**

Though primarily driven by national and sub-national demand, the NIPN may not be in a position to answer all types of policy questions due to the lack of the right data of the right quality.

Broad questions may need to be broken down into more specific sub-questions that can be answered by NIPN, depending on data availability and quality.

Certain questions (e.g. regarding causality, impact or cost-effectiveness) may require new data collection in an appropriate study design or may be answered through review of the global scientific literature.

In both cases NIPN may refer the question to a nutrition partner such as a research institute.

This guidance note covers important issues to address during the preparation phase prior to setting up a NIPN, as well as during the inception phase and the early stages of implementation.

