



Ethiopia Case Study on Capacity Development for NIPN

The Ethiopia NIPN country team is adopting a dual approach to building capacity by addressing immediate needs for NIPN specific capacity while developing a long term and systematic capacity strengthening strategy which supports the overall monitoring, evaluation and research agenda of the national nutrition program.

NIPN capacity needs assessment

To develop Ethiopia's long-term capacity to manage and maintain a NIPN, it is important to identify existing capacities as well as any additional capacities needed to sustain the NIPN approach in the country. A Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) was launched in 2018 to explore capacity gaps related to evidence based policy making and the monitoring, evaluation and research agenda of the National Nutrition Program (NNP).

This process was initiated by a workshop, facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which brought together 36 nutrition monitoring and research experts from various sectors and institutions in October 2018. Most of the workshop participants play a role in the National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee, which also has an advisory role for NIPN. The aims of the workshop were:

- (i) To define a framework for the capacity needs assessment and subsequent strategy related to strengthening the national nutrition monitoring, evaluation, and research agenda, and within it specific needs related to NIPN
- (ii) To agree on the current architecture for nutrition related policy processes, monitoring and evaluation and research i.e. assess the capacity of this aspect of the nutrition system in Ethiopia and how NIPN could strengthen it.

Workshop participants developed a framework, which included the 'demand capacity' for evidence by the policy makers as well as the 'supply capacity' of existing evidence, across three related levels (individual, organizational and systemic). As a result of this workshop an approach paper was developed, which guides the subsequent steps of this multisectoral process.

The next step is the actual assessment of the existing capacities and capacity needs, which was launched in the first trimester of 2019 through an elaborate multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholders participatory process. It included questionnaires, interviews and follow-up consultations with key stakeholders from different ministries, national institutions and universities responsible for collecting and monitoring data for nutrition, and for nutrition-related evaluation and research. Information was sought from over 20 national institutions, in addition to key informant interviews with multisectoral users of these data, including programmatic and policy decision makers.

NIPN capacity development strategy

The findings of the capacity need assessment will be used to develop a capacity strengthening strategy, which will be finalized in the second trimester of 2019. In the meantime, action is already underway to address immediate capacity needs within NIPN.

Short-term capacity development

A number of activities were undertaken during the first year of NIPN implementation to address the immediate capacity needs at the individual, organizational and systemic level. These needs were identified through the experiences with the “Learning-by- Doing” demonstration project (see later), rapid capacity needs assessments by direct NIPN stakeholders and were initiated in advance of the NIPN capacity assessment workshop.

Individual level

Different approaches have been used, including short training courses, ‘learning by doing’ and peer learning. Details of individual capacity development activities undertaken by Ethiopia in 2018 and 2019 are summarized in the table below < insert link to pop-up table>.

Organisational level

Dedicated staff

Within EPHI a small, dedicated, team has been assigned to NIPN which collaborates with additional nutrition researchers from EPHI’s Food Science and Nutrition Directorate and other relevant directorates. Their capacity has been strengthened in project management, creating a common understanding of the NIPN approach, analytical and communication capacities and finally creating a better understanding of the different elements of a data repository.

Systemic level

Research-Policy seminars

EPHI has started organizing regular NIPN Nutrition Research and Policy Seminars. These seminars bring together researchers, program implementers and policy decision makers to discuss and disseminate existing policy-relevant research findings. Participants come from research institutes, universities, non-government organisations and development partners.

Multi-sectoral involvement

Selected staff of key ministries involved in the National Nutrition Program (NNP) and research institutions that are key for NIPN have been able to access the training opportunities provided under NIPN thus strengthening the long-term capacity of the broader Ethiopian nutrition system and forging partnerships. Members of the Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee as well as of the Food Based Dietary Guidelines Technical Committee and various universities participated actively in the analytical training.

Long-term capacity development

In parallel to addressing short-term needs, the NIPN aims to address long term capacity requirements to manage and maintain a NIPN. Besides the research policy seminars and the multisectoral engagements, they also include:

PhD training

Long term capacities are being strengthened by involving PhD students from local universities in the formal NIPN training courses. In addition, EPHI has a capacity building budget for staff linked to the NIPN analysis unit or the NIPN advisory committee to attend training (online or formal) in Ethiopia or overseas, which will lead to a certificate, diploma or master’s degree at an overseas university. EPHI

can also hire local training institutes and subcontract local universities. There is also a small grant scheme to encourage and support the enrolment of about six staff involved in the NIPN to pursue a PhD programme to sustain capacities beyond the project timeframe. Two researchers have been identified and started their PhD programmes at Addis Ababa University in September 2018.

Mentoring

The Senior Technical and Policy Advisor and the National Research Officer at IFPRI are assigned to support the NIPN full time and they provide continuous support and on the job training for staff and organisations involved in NIPN. In addition, IFPRI provides needs based technical support, which covers a wide set of NIPN skills, including writing, communication and analytical skills. In 2019, a report writing mentor was assigned to provide temporary support to the team. In 2019, IFPRI also assigned a researcher to guide a specific analytical process for further analysis of existing data.

Guidance notes

A set of guidance notes on different aspects of the NIPN approach have been prepared by the NIPN GSF. This guidance aims to facilitate a coherent approach to implementing the NIPN operational cycle. NIPN team members from EPHI as well as from other key partner's institutions from the national nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee participated in webinars as well as in an on-site country workshop on the content of the guidance notes. The NIPN team in Ethiopia will adapt the guidelines to the local context. The NIPN Global Support Facility (GSF) based in Europe also provides direct technical support to NIPN country teams.

Challenges and opportunities

While embarking into developing the capacity development strategy, the Ethiopia country case shows the importance of focusing on the bigger nutrition governance structure, national policies and programs in order to prevent overlap and ensure a sustainable system which supports the long-term objectives of NIPN

1. *Importance to set aside sufficient time which allows for a participatory process.* The capacity needs assessment should involve all those who will ultimately be involved in NIPN
2. *Assess earlier experiences and the existence of capacity needs assessment potentially conducted by partners' institutions or sectors.* Often, sectors or partners have conducted their own assessment already. Thus, it is useful to avoid duplication and focus on the yet 'uncovered' or 'un-addressed' elements of capacity need assessment.
3. *In developing the evaluation tools for the actual capacity needs assessment, be mindful about what the objective is and how to formulate the demand on capacity needs.* The questionnaire design is an important element of the capacity need assessment as it influences the final output and its scope. Thus, the questionnaire and evaluation tools have to be designed to explore and capture the capacities to be developed as a matter of priority and that will help to unlock potential bottlenecks and bring solutions to the key sectors and partners involved in the national monitoring, evaluation and research agenda in nutrition.
4. *Be mindful of the selection of the respondents for the capacity need assessment and make sure to involve those linked to the national nutrition program.* Where NIPN is supporting a national policy or program, it is important to link this capacity assessment and strategy on the actors involved in monitoring, evaluation, research or policy relevant of this national program.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN ETHIOPIA SO FAR

INDIVIDUAL	Topic	Participants	Provider
Short Training courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light literature review 	8 EPHI experts involved in WASH demonstration project (see "learning by doing")	EPHI & IFPRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytical framework for understanding policy reform processes 	34 participants from multiple sectors involved in the National Nutrition Program	EPHI & IFPRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STATA training (learning how to manipulation STATA; exercises geared to analyzing health related data of Living Standard Measurement Surveys) 	27 nutrition staff from EPHI, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Universities of Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Hawassa, Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Water	EPHI & IFPRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse household income, consumption and expenditure surveys (consumption pattern, consumer choice, the role of prices, accessibility, affordability and diet composition) 	23 nutrition researchers from EPHI, EIAR, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as Addis Ababa University	EPHI & IFPRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share IFPRI's experiences on data sharing, the development of a repository and relevant guidelines, approaches to confidentiality and access to data 	EPHI and EIAR staff	EPHI and IFPRI
"Learning by doing"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Demonstration research project' in 4 phases to review the evidence for linkages between the WASH sector, and health and nutrition outcomes; allows to identifying capacity needs which require direct attention. Most phases of this project are being supported by IFPRI experts (mentoring or training approach) 	EPHI NIPN staff	EPHI and IFPRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to one small research question while using data of the household income, expenditure and consumption data with support of an IFPRI technical advisor 		IFPRI and EPHI
Peer learning; South-South exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in Conferences such as 8th African Nutrition Epidemiology Conference (ANECVIII) conference & FAO-IFPRI 'Accelerating the end of hunger and malnutrition' Conference; Global GSF workshops Learning from other project such as POSHAN in India 	EPHI staff and National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee members ; high level nutrition policy makers ; Minister advisors on nutrition	Peers of other countries such as Thailand, Mali, Niger, Bangladesh, South East Asia, India and China