



# *Summary of the Methodology used for the NIPN Capacity Needs Assessment*

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# Methodology for Ethiopia’s National Information Platform for Nutrition Capacity Needs Assessment

## Introduction

The methodology section below is extracted from Section 2 “Methodology” of the report “Capacity needs assessment for nutrition monitoring evaluation and policy research”. The report can be accessed via Ethiopia’s National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) website (<http://www.nipn.ephi.gov.et/>). All references to tables, annexes, figures and literature references in the methodology description below can be found in the report.

The methodology section describes the processes and implementation steps used by Ethiopia’s NIPN team to conduct the capacity needs assessment (CNA) for nutrition monitoring evaluation and policy research. While the NIPN was the starting point for this assessment, national capacity needs and gaps related to nutrition data and policymaking have been considered more broadly. The CNA process resulted in a set of recommendations which are documented in the report.

## Methodology

To develop Ethiopia’s capacity for nutrition monitoring, evaluation and policy research, the CNA identified existing capacities and additional capacities needed to implement the NIPN. This approach drew on a global framework for conducting capacity needs assessments previously developed and applied by IFPRI (Babu, 2017). It uses the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) definition for capacity assessments: “identifying and understanding the existing situation in a country or a sector [and] the associated capacity development assets and needs” (FAO 2012). This definition highlights the importance of recognizing existing capacities as well as capacity gaps and constraints. The framework also uses an adaptation of the United Nations Development Program’s three-dimensional approach, which defines capacity strengthening as the “process through which individuals, organizations, and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time” (UNDP 2008).

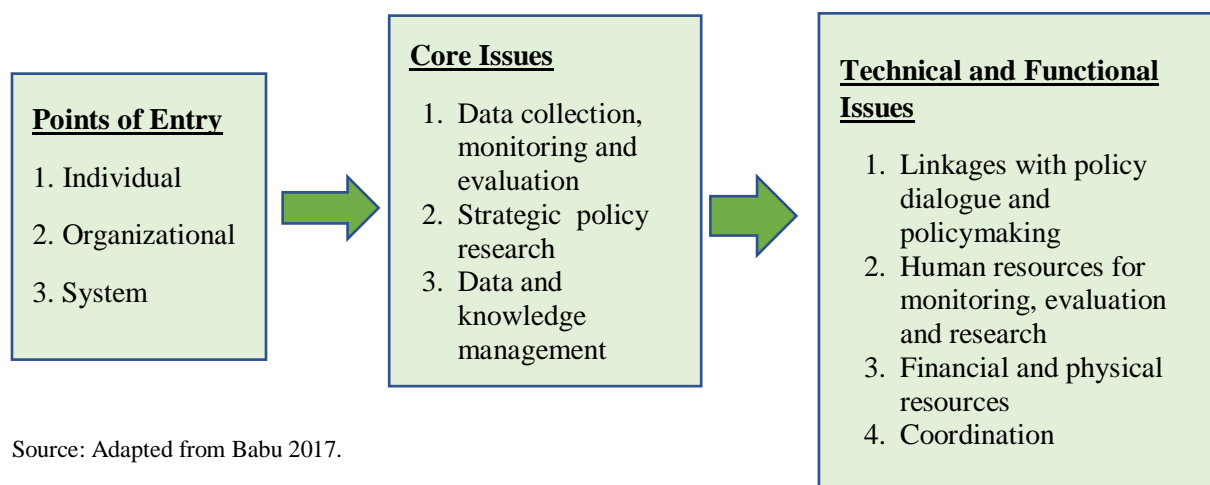
The IFPRI CNA framework has been tailored to the capacity needs of the NIPN in Ethiopia, and more broadly to nutrition monitoring, evaluation and policy research. As illustrated in Figure 2, the multidimensional approach from Babu 2017 was adapted to the Ethiopian context. The framework considers the point of entry for the assessment, the core issues, and technical and functional issues.

The points of entry for the NIPN CNA are the system, organizational, and individual levels. System-level capacity refers to the enabling environment—in this case the nutrition governance system—that is required to make use of the capacity developed at institutional and individual levels (see Section 3.1). Interviews and questionnaires were used to gather information related to the role of various decision-makers and their level of influence in the policy process. Organizations identified through the NIPN stakeholder mapping exercise were interviewed to identify and understand their capacity needs for tasks

related to the thematic issues (EPHI 2018). At the individual level, the skills of staff involved in nutrition monitoring, evaluation and policy research were assessed to identify existing capacities and capacity gaps in knowledge management, analytical research skills, and policy analysis. The assessment drew on data on education, qualification, and training, disaggregated by gender and age of the staff.

Using the individual, organizational, and system levels as entry points, the Ethiopian NIPN CNA considered the core capacity issues at each level and then took a more detailed look at the technical and functional capacity gaps and needs. The core issues assessed were (i) data collection, monitoring and evaluation, (ii) strategic policy research, and (iii) data and knowledge management and sharing. These issues require certain technical and functional capacities such as linkages with policy dialogue, human, financial and physical resources, and coordination.

Figure 1: The NIPN CNA framework



Source: Adapted from Babu 2017.

Further analysis was guided by the following questions (adapted from Babu 2017):

- What are the country-specific needs for strategic policy dialogue to support evidence-based policymaking for nutrition?
- What individual and organizational capacities are needed for strategic generation of nutrition-related evidence, data management, monitoring, and policy research under the NFNP and the NIPN in the short, medium, and long term?
- How can these capacities be harnessed for effective use in the organizations involved in the monitoring, evaluation and policy research related to the national nutrition agenda?
- What institutional and capacity constraints exist in data collection, management and sharing, monitoring, evaluation, policy research, and knowledge management?
- How can capacity gaps be filled through the ongoing national and local processes under the NIPN?

Using these guiding questions, the assessment evaluated the existing capacities and constraints that affect the implementation of the NIPN in Ethiopia as well as the national monitoring, evaluation and policy research agenda for nutrition.

The assessment was implemented jointly by EPHI and IFPRI. CNA methods included quantitative and qualitative methods, a detailed literature review, interviews, structured questionnaires, and consultative workshops to gather data and information on the issues, challenges, and constraints facing selected organizations involved in national nutrition monitoring, evaluation and policy research. More than 130 people were consulted or interviewed (see Annexes 2 and 3). Throughout the process, a learning approach was applied to help build understanding of capacity assessments among the NIPN stakeholders.

***The implementation steps have been the following:***

The system and institutional points of entry required a mapping of the national nutrition and NIPN stakeholders and their involvement in the platform, identifying capacity gaps among key NIPN stakeholders. In Ethiopia several nutrition stakeholder mapping exercises have already been carried out, including one done in parallel with the NIPN CNA (Transform Nutrition 2015; EPHI 2019a). Existing mapping exercises were used to draft a list of NIPN stakeholders (EPHI 2018).

A first consultative workshop with 38 stakeholders of the National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER SC), organized in October 2018, set the boundaries of the assessment and identified some capacity gaps at the system level. During this workshop, the mapping of the NIPN stakeholders was fine-tuned (See Table 1).<sup>1</sup> This mapping set the stage for the actual assessment. It was agreed that only government institutions that have a role in the nutrition MER SC would be interviewed.

Table 1 : The NIPN stakeholders at system and institutional levels

**NIPN stakeholders at system level:**

- *The National Nutrition Coordination Body; The National Nutrition Technical Committee; The Food and Nutrition Council:* these organizations consist of high-level government multisectoral decision-makers, state ministers and relevant advisors involved in highest level of nutrition decision-making.
- *The dedicated NIPN Advisory Committee:* a small committee with senior nutrition experts and advisors with high-level convening power and leverage to influence high-level decision-makers (mainly Government, one donor).
- *Member institutions of the National Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER SC):* a representative group of multisectoral and multi-institutional stakeholders that leads and coordinates national nutrition monitoring, evaluation and research (ministries, universities, implementers, development partners, NGOs, UN, national and international academic institutions).

**NIPN stakeholders at institutional level:**

- *The Food Science and Nutrition Research Directorate (FSNRD at EPHI)* is leading various nutrition research projects and houses the NIPN. It includes 69 nutrition research experts and various NIPN consultants. The directorate is also the chair the MER SC.

<sup>1</sup> The role of the stakeholders in the national nutrition agenda are described in the policy background of section 3. The role of these stakeholders for NIPN is described in EPHI 2018.

- *Other important NIPN stakeholders at EPHI* include the Policy Translation Directorate, the National Data Management Center for Health and various EPHI service directorates (human resources, procurement; finance and IT).
- *The Ethiopian Institute for Agriculture Research:* Food Science and Nutrition Directorate, co-chairs the MER SC.
- *Universities:* primarily the food and nutrition/public health faculties of universities (also members of the MER SC).
- *Ministries, signatories of the NNP:* technical departments of ministries most involved in nutrition agenda; M&E departments of ministries involved in the NNP (and often members of the MER SC).
- *Selected government agencies involved in data collection and analysis:* agencies directly involved in the NNP or in the MER SC, such as the Central Statistical Agency (CSA), the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC), including the Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit (ENCU)
- *Development partners:* NGO nutrition program implementers, development partners, donors, international research organizations.

Based on this information, a NIPN CNA approach paper was developed by IFPRI (Babu 2018) and validated by EPHI in December 2018. The NIPN team then identified the capacities required from all NIPN stakeholders for successful implementation of NIPN at each level (individual, institutional and systems) and for each element of the NIPN operational cycle, including question formulation, data management and analysis, and communication of findings (EPHI 2018). This list of required capacities for managing and maintaining the NIPN guided the adaptation of the existing IFPRI CNA questionnaires (already used in Niger, Ethiopia, Malawi and Ghana (Dittoh 2014; Tadesse and Tsegaye 2014; Phiri 2014; Babu et al 2018)), to the Ethiopian nutrition context. Different questionnaires were designed to solicit information on how organizations and their units are administered, coordinated, and led for tasks related to nutrition monitoring, evaluation, policy research, data, and knowledge sharing. The questionnaires also touched on individual capacities and constraints that organizations face to more effective functioning.

Key experts from the organizations identified during the first stakeholder workshop were interviewed to understand their roles in nutrition data collection and to identify additional relevant departments and divisions to contact. Annex 1 provides the list of divisions contacted and interviewed. Four NNP signatory ministries<sup>2</sup> which did not have nutrition-sensitive or nutrition-specific indicators or did not collect any data on nutrition were excluded from further interviews. Only two ministries (Agriculture and Health) have dedicated nutrition units. In the other ministries, nutrition is covered by focal points, housed in various divisions. Within the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Food and Beverage Pharmaceutical Industry Development Institute was considered as the relevant division to interview. The Federal Quota Declaration Implementation Coordination Unit (SDCU) was selected for an interview, given its mandate to bring together several sectors for nutrition and its role in monitoring the implementation of the NNP at all levels. The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) was also identified as a key

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Trade; Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity; Ministry of Women, Youth and Children, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation

government player, as it collects various nutrition data and houses the national Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit. In total, 52 experts from 20 institutions were interviewed, of which 17 institutions were selected to undertake the detailed NIPN CNA questionnaire (see Table 2).

Table 2: Institutions undergoing the extended NIPN Capacity Needs Assessment interviews

Research Institutes, Statistical Agency and Universities	Ministries and Governmental Programs
1. Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI)	1. Ministry of Health (MoH)
2. Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)	2. Ministry of Trade and Industry / Food and Beverage Pharmaceutical Industry Development Institute (MoTI)
3. Addis Ababa University (AAU)	3. Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
4. Hawassa University (HU)	4. Ministry of Education (MoE)
5. Haramaya University (HaU)	5. Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA)
6. Jimma University (JU)	6. National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC)
7. Bahir Dar University (BDU)	7. Federal Sequota Declaration Federal Implementation Coordination Unit (SDCU)
8. University of Gonder (UoG)	
9. Mekelle University (MU)	
10. Central Statistical Agency (CSA)	

For each of the institutions, the interview process involved several rounds of discussions with different departments and interviewees. Ministries and research institutes in Addis Ababa were interviewed between March and April 2019. Regional universities were interviewed during the last two weeks of April and throughout May 2019.

As part of the institutional-level questionnaires, questions were tailored so that each department could be involved in questions related to the nutrition activity and policy research in a way that represented the institution. Department-level heads or directors were questioned on areas related to constraints of human resources, financial resources and allocated budgets, access to infrastructure, data management and sharing, the link between their statistical data and policy, and internal management. For institutions that are signatories of the NNP but do not have a nutrition department or assigned nutrition focal person, a key informant interview was designed to look at how they are aligning their main activities with their role in the NNP and how they capture their data or progress. To assess individual level capacities, data was collected on staff educational background, age, ability to use or access analytical software, and research publications or reports.

In addition, 12 qualitative interviews were organized at the initial and final stages of the assessment. These enabled the team to understand the enabling environment, the nutrition political leadership, the level of influence in the policy process, the legal framework, and the ability to co-ordinate efforts for the nutrition agenda.

Ultimately, the NIPN CNA provided a comprehensive view of the capacities needed to strengthen Ethiopia’s system for nutrition monitoring, evaluation, policy research, and data and knowledge management. Key findings were presented and validated during a second consultative workshop organized in June 2019, which brought together 44 participants (see list of participants in Annex 2). Priorities for capacity strengthening were identified by the workshop participants.

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