Developing Country Scale-up Plans

Background

Accelerating progress in improving the nutritional status of women and children require leadership of national authorities, development of clear planning and engagement of multiple stakeholders at national and international level. Some countries have been able to achieve considerable progress in a relatively short time, a progress that can be sustained. Success factors have been a high level political commitment, clear assessment of the needs, engagement of multiple sectors and multiple stakeholders, efficient and comprehensive governance mechanisms, a solid health infrastructure, adequate investment, also supported by international partners, action at national and local level, good monitoring systems and social mobilization.

Success stories can be replicated, taking into account the specific country needs and context. It is important that scale up plans are owned and led by national authorities and are shared and supported by all stakeholders. The WHO 2010 review of nutrition policies as well as the experiences and outcomes of the Landscape Analysis during the last 3 years identified gaps in the design and content of policies and programmes, in nutrition governance, in implementation capacities and mechanisms and in monitoring and evaluation. These gaps should be addressed in the context of the development of scale up plans.

Individual country plans will contribute to the global plan to improve nutritional well-being of the world population, in particular infant and young child nutrition and will be supported by it. Global initiatives such as the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative (SUN) may support country commitment and facilitate the mobilization of technical and financial resources for implementation.

Additional experience comes from the work of the Landscape Analysis on countries' readiness to accelerate action in nutrition\(^1\), by the work of REACH in Lao PDR and Mauritania and by the Mainstreaming nutrition initiative\(^2\).

Based on this experience, this paper proposes a model to develop scale-up plans. Shortly, the model involves a first stage of assessing gaps, constraints and opportunities for integrating new and existing effective nutrition actions, including the analysis of existing capacities and resources available and the promising actions for scaling up. Some countries have already undertaken an in-depth assessment and will not need to repeat it.

The second stage would involve the development of evidence-informed policy option briefs with comprehensive and operational scale-up implementation plans for nutrition based on each specific country context. This stage will be followed by negotiated support to scale-up plans with donors.

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\(^1\) Launched at the end of 2007 and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In-depth country assessment has been carried out in 12 high-burden countries by national authorities, jointly with highly committed partners and stakeholders.

\(^2\) Supported by the World Bank. In-depth analysis on strategic capacity was carried out in 18 countries. Pelletier, SCN News, 2008.
The process of development is also meant to generate additional policy attention and to translate commitment into accountability.

**Steps in the development of scale-up plans**

The following is a proposed process for developing country scale-up plans.

**Step 1. Context mapping and assessment of implementation challenges in countries**

This task involves the establishment of a stakeholders’ group (i.e. country team) and implementation of a country assessment at different levels (i.e. national, regional, provincial, district, health facility, community). Annex 1 provides proposed country assessment process and suggested preparatory actions in countries for those who will need to implement this first step of context mapping and assessment.

**Step 2: Holding of a country stakeholders’ workshop to discuss and identify existing challenges for implementation of scale up plans**

Following the context mapping and in-depth country assessment undertaken in Step 1, a stakeholders’ meeting could be held to review the outcomes of the assessment. This stakeholders’ meeting would last two days and could be organized in all countries, i.e. regardless of whether the countries have gone through Step 1 (Context mapping and assessment of implementation challenges in countries) or they have not implemented Step 1 as they have recently completed a similar country assessment.

For the countries which are implementing Step 1, this meeting could take place at the end of the country assessment along with the review of the outcomes of the in-depth country assessment.

A wide variety of stakeholders is needed for a successful scale up of nutrition at the country level, including a broad range of government ministries at the national level and also at provincial/district levels, if possible, civil society organizations, the private sector, regional and sub-regional bodies, intergovernmental organizations of the United Nations system, multi-lateral banks, external development partners and the research community, so that in-depth technical discussions could be undertaken, including discussions on possible interventions, delivery channel, governance and financing options, potential coverage, and access to various nutrition-action options with emphasis on locally relevant social determinants of health and health care. It would be very helpful to ensure the involvement of experts and researchers at the country level who are knowledgeable in background evidence on possible policy options. However, if no local expertise is available, WHO will provide required technical support in consultation with EVIPNet.

Strategies should reflect the best available evidence for what is needed and for what works in practice adapting to the country context. When reviewing the possible interventions for scaling up, relevance and applicability of the interventions presented in the 2nd background paper to the WHO Infant and young child nutrition and particularly the 13 direct interventions to prevent and treat undernutrition proposed by SUN Framework for Action would be considered.
**Step 3: Analysis of programme delivery options and preparation of policy briefs**

Based on the discussions and decisions made at the stakeholders' meeting in Step 2, policy option briefs will be prepared by a country team with the support of local experts and researchers who are knowledgeable in background evidence on selected interventions. An external expert who is familiar with the EVIPNet process\(^1\) could be identified to also participate in supporting the process in developing policy option briefs, where required.

The policy briefs are evidence-informed, user-friendly and offer policy choices adapted to specific contexts including the assessment of feasibilities based on the reality of existing resources. The policy briefs also include consideration of human resources; options on financing and using scarce resources efficiently and effectively; and addressing cultural factors and equity issues. The state-of-the-art methodologies used by EVIPNet provide a full cycle from research evidence to policy; to deliberative dialogues with the participation of researchers, policy-makers and stakeholder representatives; to operational research for monitoring and evaluation of actions; and finally to the necessary adjustments of the implemented actions. The EVIPNet methodology will be applied in translating scientific guidance in nutrition into country-level nutrition action - which has never before been done.

Consideration of policy options would include the analysis of advantage and disadvantage (potential harm), acceptability, obstacles to implementation (including social determinants) and strategies to implement (including delivery options and coverage), cost-effectiveness of the interventions considered, possible programmes and interventions, target groups, assessment of equity implications, as well as an assessment of the resource requirements including both in-kind resources such as human resources and equipment, as well as the financial resources that would be required for implementation. It will also be helpful to model the expected impact associated with the different programme delivery options, as well as the expected long-term sustainability of the planned activities.

The identification of resource needs may be undertaken using a costing tool, such as the Unified Health Model which is being developed by the UN Interagency Working Group on Costing (IAWG-COSTING). The Unified Health Model also allows for an assessment of the likely health impact that will be derived from scaling up nutrition interventions within the health sector. A dynamic software is currently being tested for use by the IAWG-COSTING. The World Bank\(^2\) has also developed a costing model for the 13 Lancet interventions that can be considered.

The assessment of the various policy options will then be developed into policy option briefs which will describe the operational requirements, expected coverage of the different delivery options and will also include decision trees to guide selection of policy options.

The following are some of the questions which should be considered when developing policy option briefs:

**A: To clarify the problem**

The following questions can be used to clarify the problem that a policy brief addresses:

1. What is the problem and how did it come to attention?
2. How big is the problem?

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\(^1\) The EVIPNet has worked with 32 country teams of researchers and policy-makers to produce policy briefs on a range of health topics, but not yet on nutrition. (Lavis and Panisset, 2010)

3. What is the cause of the problem?
4. How has the problem been framed (described) and what are the consequences of that?

**B: To decide and describe the options that a policy brief includes:**

1. What options should be presented?
2. What is known about the impacts of alternative options?
3. How confident can we be about the likely impacts of alternative options?
4. How should information about the likely impacts of alternative options be summarised?

**C: To identify and describe barriers to implementing options and strategies for addressing those barriers:**

1. What barriers are there for implementing each option?
2. What strategies are there to address those?
3. What is known about the effects of those strategies?
4. How should information about barriers and the likely effects of strategies for addressing those be summarized?

Annex 2 provides a sample framework of policy option briefs, for reference and use, if helpful.

**Step 4: Convening deliberative dialogue**

After developing policy option briefs in Step 3, the second stakeholders' meeting should be convened. This meeting should bring together broader stakeholders involving high-level policy makers (including representatives of the Prime Minister or President) and interested donors and will discuss and validate evidence-base and contextual issues related to the set of policy option briefs generated in order to select collectively appropriate policy options for scaling up action in the country.

Convening of a high-level deliberative dialogue would achieve the political commitment of the national government to implement the scale up plan as well as to ensure the identification and availability of the funds and resources for implementation as well as for monitoring and evaluating the progress of implementation and impact of the scale up plans.

It is envisaged that this dialogue meeting will be for two days and should be facilitated by experienced facilitators, selected locally and also externally (i.e. selected among the members of EVIPNet country teams). To ensure the effective deliberative dialogue and meet the objectives of the deliberative dialogue involving high-level polity makers as well as interested donors, the following issues be reviewed:

- What are the objectives of the policy dialogue?
- Who will participate in the dialogue?
- How will the dialogue be organized?
- What needs to be done following the policy dialogue?
Step 5: Preparation of scale up plan

Taking into consideration of the outcomes and decisions of the deliberative dialogue held in Step 4, the country scale up plans would be prepared through translating selected policy option briefs. The detailed scale up plans would, therefore, be based on the evidence-informed policy option briefs developed, reviewed and agreed by all concerned stakeholders including high-level policy makers and should include nutrition targets; policy and programme areas to be covered; description of delivery options; responsible stakeholders and accountability of implementation; capacity needs; financial investment; and monitoring and evaluation. The scale-up plans should also be aligned with overall plans for the health sector and the broader development agenda, such as National Health Strategic Plans, Medium Term Strategic Frameworks, and PRSPs.

The scale up plans should also include how to implement social mobilization.
Proposed country assessment process
and suggested preparatory actions in countries

**INITIAL PREPARATIONS IN COUNTRY**

- **Establishing a Country Assessment Team**
  - Identify the members of the Country Assessment Team. Who are the important players in relation to the objectives and outputs to be achieved? Which team members will be able to commit full time throughout the assessment process?
  - Identify the leader of the Country Assessment Team so that any necessary decisions to be made can be directed to the leader of the Country Assessment Team. This is usually the head of the lead national agency for nutrition.

- **Agreeing on time period, scope and budget**
  - As part of the initial planning, the Country Team needs to agree on dates, scope in terms of number of fields to visit as well as budget for transport and other implicated costs.

**PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT BEGINS**

The country team needs to make a series of preparations for the assessment to run smoothly in order to maximize the outputs. This includes preparing a desk review background overview document of the nutrition situation, architecture and policies in the country, planning and scheduling field visits and interviews at national level, adapting the Country Assessment Tool, and planning the first country stakeholders' workshop described in Step 2 and other meetings as required.

**Desk review:**
The desk review will serve as an important point of reference for the assessment team and will also form part of the final report. It should include:

- **Brief overview analysis of the nutrition situation**
  - Assemble key nutrition indicators that show main nutrition problems and trends. This should be accompanied by a brief analysis of relevant causes at immediate, underlying and basic level. Please compare with the data available in the country profile of the Nutrition Landscape Tracking System (NLIS) (see [http://www.who.int/nutrition/nlis/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/nutrition/nlis/en/index.html)) which brought together existing data for countries.

- **Mapping of key stakeholders for nutrition in the country**
  - Map key stakeholders in nutrition in the country, including who they are, what they do, who are their programmes targeting and where they are implementing their programmes (i.e. coverage of programmes).

- **Mapping of existing, on-going nutrition-related policies, programmes, projects and activities and legal and institutional framework**
  - Review and complete a mapping of existing, on-going nutrition-related policies, programmes, projects and activities including the information on by
whom (i.e. who is implementing them?) and where they are being
implemented (i.e. location and extent of the coverage of the programmes)
- Review the legal and institutional framework (i.e. what is the legislation in
  place and who is responsible for enforcing it?)
- Review of recommendations from previous assessments or evaluations and
determination of whether they have been applied/implemented
- Review of progress on Libreville Declaration and the national plans of joint
  action between health and the environment (i.e., in particular for policy
  coherence around advocacy steps for ministry of agriculture)

Preparations for the assessment:
This includes logistics of the field visits and interviews as well as the tools to be used.

- **Planning and scheduling the field visits**
  - **Identify sites**
    - Develop selection criteria (i.e. different nutrition systems, different
      nutrition problems, etc.)
    - Assess if there are any special restrictions for international UN staff to
      visits those selected sites
  - **Schedule meetings** with decision-makers in nutrition at regional/district level
    as appropriate, and inform them about purpose of the country assessment.
    Consider whether it is most feasible to arrange individual meetings (e.g. with
district chief of health) or whether to hold a group discussion (e.g. with district
chiefs of health, agriculture, education, decentralization, environment, etc).
  - **Schedule visits** with facilities, health centres, etc as appropriate, and inform
them about purpose of the assessment
  - **Plan possible team members for proposed site visits** (interagency, mix of
    national and international team members). The allocation of team members
should be finally agreed with all team members to ensure their availability.
  - **Arrange in advance necessary transportations and accommodations** for
    the site visits

- **Planning and scheduling the interviews with stakeholders in nutrition at the
  national level**
  - **Review the mapping of the key stakeholders undertaken (see above) and identify
    the stakeholders** from government sectors, development partners (UN and NGOs),
private sector, etc. who should be interviewed at the national level
  - **Schedule meetings** with these stakeholders, allow 1 hour per interview and
sufficient travel time between each meeting.
  - **Ensure transportation** (i.e. vehicles) are available as needed.

- **Adapting the Landscape Analysis Country Assessment tools**
  - **Review all the assessment tools and questionnaires** to determine how
    they need to be adapted for your country situation, and translate them, if
necessary.
    - National level (1 tool: questionnaire for national level)
    - Field (5 tools: questionnaires for district level manager, hospital
      manager and facility staff, check-list for facility, discussion topics for
      group discussion)
  - Tools and questionnaires need to be photocopied after finalization and
agreement

- **Preparation of documents** for handing out during interviews/field-visits
In order to capitalize on advocacy opportunity during interviews/meetings/field visits, consider assembling/photocopying key documents such as:

- Lancet executive summary (www.globalnutritionseries.org/series)
- National Nutrition Policy or other material used in country

**Preparation of meetings:**
Apart from the first country stakeholders' workshop at the end of the assessment to present findings and reach agreement on recommendations and next steps, a number of other meetings might also be deemed necessary.

- **First country stakeholders' workshop**
  - As described in Step 2 above, a country stakeholders' workshop with broad participation will be held immediately after the assessment to share the results and agree on main findings from the assessment that will guide the development of policy options. Necessary preparatory steps include: inviting participants and high-level decision-makers for opening speakers, identifying chair of discussions, drafting agenda, sending invitations, booking meeting venue, preparing documentation etc.

- **Participatory analysis meeting**
  - In an assessment of one week (5 days) duration the analysis is held on the 4th day, although countries that allocate more than one week should set aside more time for this stage. It should be considered if the analysis will benefit from the participation of other partners than the assessment team, especially for the formulation of recommendations.

- **Other meetings**
  - **Initial briefing meeting(s) with key stakeholders:** Who needs to be informed about the Country Assessment? (e.g. heads of UN Agency Country Offices). Should it be a group meeting or individual meetings? Are there any high-level policy-makers who also need to be visited for briefing and/or courtesy?
  - **After the first country stakeholders' workshop:** Consider whether there is a need for the team to visit and report on the process and results of the week to any higher level decision-makers.
Framework of an Evidence-Informed Policy Option Brief

Executive Summary

Included:
- Description of a health system problem
- Viable options for addressing this problem
- Strategies for implementing these options

Not included: recommendations
This policy brief does not make recommendations regarding which policy option to choose

Who is this policy brief for?
Policymakers, their support staff, and other stakeholders with an interest in the problem addressed by this policy brief

Why was this policy brief prepared?
To inform deliberations about health policies and programmes by summarizing the best available evidence about the problem and viable solutions

What is an evidence-based policy brief?
Evidence-based policy briefs bring together global research evidence (from systematic reviews*) and local evidence to inform deliberations about health policies and programmes

*Systematic Review: A summary of studies addressing a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise the relevant research, and to collect and analyse data from this research

Full Report
The evidence summarised in this Executive Summary is described in more detail in the Full Report
Key messages

The problem:

[Problem heading]
[text]

Policy options:

[Policy options heading]

• [policy option] [text]
• [policy option] [text]
• [policy option] [text]
• [policy option] [text]

• [cost text]
• [evaluation text]

Implementation strategies:

[implementation strategy text]

• [text]
• [text]
The problem: [text]

Size of the problem
[text]

Factors underlying the problem
[text]

Four policy options
[text]

Policy option 1:
[text]

Policy option 2:
[text]

Policy option 3:
[text]

Policy option 4:
[text]
Implementation considerations

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Next steps

The aim of this policy brief is to foster dialogue and judgements that are informed by the best available evidence. The intention is not to advocate specific options or close off discussion. Further actions will flow from the deliberations that the policy brief is intended to inform. These might include:

- [text]
- [text]
- [text]