Annual Gathering • **Year 2** • 18 November 2021

STRENGTHENING
NUTRITION INFORMATION SYSTEMS

in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Uganda and Zambia (EC-NIS project)

unicef

World Health Organization

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Emerald Atyang - 3 years 10 months, enjoys a banana after enjoying a nutritious meal for lunch.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CATIE	Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center
CSC	Country Steering Committee
C4N	Capacity For Nutrition
DGS	General Health Directorate
DHIO	District Health Information Officer
DHO	District Health Officer
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS),
DHIS2	District Health Information System
DPC	Department of Planning and Cooperation
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
DQS	Dietary Quality Score
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FMOH	Federal Ministry of Health
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HQ	Headquarters
IMAM	Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition
IPD	Inpatient Department
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LQAS	Lot Quality Assurance Sampling
M&N	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHIS	Health Management Information System
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHIS	National Health Information System
NIPN	National Information Platform for Nutrition
NNP	National Nutrition Programme
NIS	Nutrition Information System
NNIS	National Nutrition Information Systems
N4G	Nutrition For Growth
OPD	Outpatient Department
PHO	Provincial Health Officer
PNN	Programme National de Nutrition
PNMIN	National Multisectoral Information Platform for Nutrition
PSC	Project Steering Committee
Q	Quarter
Q&A	Questions & Answers
RDQA	Routine Data Quality Assessment
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
S&E	Department de Suivie et Evaluation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SUN	Scaling-Up Nutrition
TEAM	Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring
TOR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNAP	Uganda Nutrition Action Plan
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISE	Unified Nutrition Information System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Aboubacar Sanogo, 36, helping to feed and play with his son.

Executive summary

ABOUT THE EC-NIS PROJECT

UNICEF and WHO, with financial support from the European Commission (EC), are implementing a project titled **"Strengthening national nutrition information systems"** in five countries in Africa and Asia: Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Laos, Uganda and Zambia for a period of four years (April 2020 - March 2024).

Timely and quality data with an adequate level of disaggregation are essential to guide country choices, allocate resources and monitor progress in nutrition. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) or national nutrition surveys are the major sources of nutrition data for many countries, but they are complex and expensive undertakings that cannot be implemented with the required frequency. It is, therefore, critical to strengthen or establish integrated nutrition information systems (NIS) of countries to enhance availability and use of routine nutrition data to better support policy development, programme design and monitoring.

UNICEF and WHO's role is to support countries in defining monitoring standards and respond to their demand for technical assistance on nutrition monitoring to address the nutrition data gaps that exist in many countries. This initiative will increase the uptake of nutrition information and provide improved knowledge for policy and programme development and implementation by increasing country capacity in monitoring programmes and national/global nutrition targets.

All country-level project activities are led, implemented and managed by a technical team in the Ministry of Health (MOH) of the country concerned, in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF country offices.

The Annual Gathering Meeting Year 2 was held on 18th November 2021, with the main aim *to review the EC-NIS project implementation to date, exchange lessons learnt and good practices, share knowledge and start planning the activities for Year 3.* Expected outputs were: **1.** to have documented lessons learned and best practices for each country; **2.** to discuss further strengthening of the collaboration between the EC-NIS project and National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) at country and global level; **3.** to present country workplans for Year 3 (2022).

The first global gathering of the project has been the Inception Meeting, which was held online from 29 September to 7 October 2020 in the form of an opening session, a series of country-specific deep-dive sessions and a wrap-up. The European Commission (EC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and World Health Organization (WHO) and governments convened of the launch of the joint project and provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to develop workplans to meet the project objectives. The key results of the meeting were a list of country-specific actions and timelines related to workplans, coordination structures, project monitoring and reporting frameworks, synergies and partnerships, visibility and communication plans.

The Annual Gathering, Year 2 was preceded by the organization of five National Review Workshops, which were held during the second half of October in each country and that contributed to prepare the participation of the Project country delegations from Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Laos, Uganda and Zambia to the global Meeting.

On 18 November 2021, about 100 representatives of partners and stakeholders involved in the project at country, regional and global levels met around an agenda which included several sessions that alternated between presentations and moments of exchange and common reflection on the experience of the project during Year 2 (January to December 2021).

In their opening remarks, the representatives of the Ministries of Health (MOH) emphasized the importance of having strong nutrition information management systems to be used in nutrition programme planning and implementation process and highlighted that nutrition information is the backbone of sound decisions, policies and programmes, and how strong national information systems play a crucial role in nutrition and health system efforts at national and global levels.

Continuing from the work done, presentations and discussions held during the National Workshops and the outcomes of these, each Project Country team presented the status of the project and the work done in their country during Year 2 (2021). All presentations followed a structured template that was developed by the Project Steering Committee and that mostly focused on 1. key achievements, 2. learning process and 3. planning for Year 3.

Overall, the implementation of the activities planned for 2021 is on track in all countries, with most activities completed or continuing as planned during Quarter 4 (Q4) of the year catching-up on the delay observed in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The countries shared good practices and key learning points on methodological, programmatic or operational issues. In Laos, one key achievement reported was to leverage existing DHIS2 platform to reflect the proposed changes in nutrition and harmonization with the broader nutrition data system of the country; another key achievement was the review of nutrition indicators. In Cote d'Ivoire, the key achievement was the development of a manual for nutrition data management. The spotlight activity in Ethiopia has been the review of existing NIS. The Unified Nutrition Information System (UNISE) - a multi-sectoral nutrition data management tool that captures nutrition specific data through the DHIS2 as well as nutrition sensitive data from the other sectors through the DHIS2 - raised lots of interest among the participants, who took the chance to ask more information about it during the Q&A sessions. In Uganda, the key achievement was the customization of the National nutrition M&E framework in the DHIS2. The spotlight activity in Zambia is the revised Nutrition Data Elements in HMIS, which is directly linked to output 2 "Integrated nutrition data elements and indicators into HMIS process".

Each project country presented main activities included in their the workplan for Year 3 (2022), as well as key areas for technical assistance and support.

The Annual Gathering was an opportunity to also emphasize how the EC-NIS project and the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) initiative collaborate at country and global levels. The EC-NIS project and NIPN Initiative are complementary in their objectives and approaches both at country and global levels; while NIPN is working with multisectoral nutrition data, the EC-NIS is focusing on nutrition data from the health sector. The two projects are interconnected in the process of using quality data to guide programming, improve decision-making, collaborate operationally and capitalize outcomes through mechanisms that are active at country and global level. Given the great potential created by the complementarity, the project country teams of both projects were invited to reflect on their current level of collaboration and how it could be strengthened further.

UNICEF HQ team took the opportunity to present new or upcoming products which will be made available to the project countries. The National Nutrition Information Systems (NNIS) - The Fundamental Series was developed jointly by UNICEF and WHO under the framework of the Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) and released the day before the meeting. An E-course has been also developed to cover the information in the NNIS Fundamental Series and will be delivered through UNICEF's global hub for learning, Agora. In addition, Technical Notes will be developed to provide more detailed technical information about individual aspects and/or issues related to developing and implementing a NNIS. Furthermore, an Administrative Data Guide to support countries in designing and implementing routine administrative reporting systems for

nutrition will be launched between December and January 2022. UNICEF and partners have also finalised the first global DHIS2 Standard Nutrition Module, due to be released in future DHIS2 up-dates in Spring 2022.

Following-up from the exchanges and active engagement throughout presentations and Q&A sessions, the country teams were encouraged to reflect further on two overall issues that pertain to the learning process and impact of the EU-NIS project: 1. what is the actual use of the dashboards and systems for actual decision-making; 2. how the countries are using the experience from the EC-NIS project to make Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitments to invest in nutrition data.

The annual gathering was closed by the remarks of the representatives of the MOH and of the Country Steering Committees, who took the opportunity to renew the commitment of the governments of Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Lao PDR, Uganda and Zambia to continue working towards the information system's transformation and effectiveness. The EC representative emphasized the role and commitment of the EC towards the fight to end malnutrition globally, and commended the impressive participation and contribution of the government authorities to the meeting, calling on the project to continue to work to further enhance government appropriation and capacity building, in line with the approach and priorities of the EC.

All participants praised the importance of events like the Annual Gathering as fundamental opportunities to allow exchange of practices, experiences, outcomes from different countries, and appreciated the efforts and promising work that has been done by the 5 project countries during Year 2, encouraging each other to take stock of the learning accrued so far and continue working towards the information system's transformation and effectiveness in Year 3.

Sitting on her favorite chair, Nakalema Betty - 3 years 6 months enjoys a water melon piece after lunch.

1 Methodology & organization of the meeting

The **Overall objective** of the Annual Gathering Meeting was to bring together country stakeholders to review key achievements against planned activities and discuss key drivers for achievements, challenges and proposed solutions on the way forward.

The **Specific objectives** were:

1. **To monitor country progress,** holding annual country-specific workshops to assess the status of implementation of the activities planned for Year 2 (January to December 2021), reporting key milestones achieved in 2021 and starting to draft the workplan for Year 3 (2022).

2. **To enhance partnerships and collaboration,** bringing together key partners and stakeholders at country, regional and global level to leverage planning and implementation of the project activities in the project countries.

3. **To facilitate knowledge sharing,** on lessons learned and good practices across and/or within countries.

The **Expected outputs** of the Meeting were:

1. To document and disseminate lessons learned and best practices for each country, having reflected upon, identified and documented key achievements, drivers of success, major challenges and potential solutions, and the way forward.

2. To discuss collaboration within the partnership between the EC-NIS project and NIPN initiative at country and global level.

3. To present country workplans for Year 3 (2022).

The meeting was preceded by the organization of five **National Review Workshops**, which were held virtually during the second half of October in each country. The Workshops were organized under the leadership of the respective Country Steering Committee (CSC), with participation from the Project Steering Committees (PSC) and country Technical Working Groups (TWG). The organization followed the dates and common agenda below:

Date	Country	Topic	Presenter
14th October 2021	Laos	• Presentation of main achievements, lessons learnt and next steps, including visibility • Presentation of EC-NIS collaboration with other partners (i.e. NIPN) • Presentation of workplan for 2022 (Year 3) • Identification of specific technical support required	**Country level:** Organized by Laos Steering Committee and Technical Working Group
14thOctober 2021	Uganda		**Country level:** Organized by Uganda Steering Committee and Technical Working Group
19th October 2021	Ethiopia		**Country level:** Organized by Ethiopia Steering Committee and Technical Working Group
21st October 2021	Zambia		**Country level:** Organized by Zambia Steering Committee and Technical Working Group
4th November 2021	Cote D'Ivoire		**Country level:** Organized by Cote D'Ivoire Steering Committee and Technical Working Group

Three-year-old Aarav Adhikari eats lunch on the terrace of his grandparents' home.

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A summary note/report was prepared for each country Workshop. The main discussion points of each workshop were used to prepare the participation of the country delegation to the global Meeting and their presentation for it.

The Annual Gathering was held virtually on **18 November 2021**, coordinated and facilitated by the Project Steering Committee (focal points were Louise Mwirigi and Mara Nyawo for UNICEF and Elisa Dominguez and Hana Bekele for WHO). The event lasted just over 3 hours, during which about 100 representatives and staff of partners and stakeholders at country, regional and global levels met around an agenda with sessions that alternated between presentations and moments of exchange and common reflection[1]:

Date & time	Country	Topic	Presenter
18th November 2021 / 12:00hrs to 15:00hrs GV time	Cote d'Ivoire Ethiopia Laos Uganda Zambia	1. Welcome and Overview of the Meeting (15 mins)	**Facilitator: Mara Nyawo (UNICEF)** Louise Mwrigi (UNICEF) Elisa Dominguez (WHO)
		2. Opening remarks (3 min each)	MOH Representative of each country
		3. Project countries: presentation of key achievements and zoom in one (10 min each)	Laos MOH Cote d'Ivoire MOH Ethiopia MOH
		4. Discussion, Q&A (20 min)	
		Break (10 min)	
		5. Project countries: presentation of key achievements and zoom in one (10 min each)	**Facilitator: Hana Bekele (WHO)** Uganda MOH Zambia MOH
		6. Discussion, Q&A (20 min)	
		7. EC-NIS and NIPN Joint Collaboration (10 min)	Juliane Pfuhl (C4N-NIPN Global Support) Elisa Dominguez (WHO)
		8. Discussion, Q&A (10 min)	
		9. Updates from HQ (10 min)	Chika Hayashi (UNICEF)
		10. Next steps	Louise Mwrigi (UNICEF)
		11. Closing remarks (3 min/each)	MOH Representative of each country EC Representative
		12. Closing of the Meeting	**Facilitators: Mara Nyawo (UNICEF) / Hana Bekele (WHO)**

1   The full list of participants is provided at **Annex 1**.

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Opening remarks

Representatives from the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Laos, Uganda and Zambia took the floor one after the other to open the meeting.

In their remarks, the representatives emphasized the importance of having strong nutrition information management systems for nutrition programme's planning and implementation, and highlighted that nutrition information is the backbone of sound decisions, policies and programmes, and how strong NIS play a crucial role in nutrition and health system efforts at national and global levels.

Dr. Chansaly Phommavong, Deputy Director General of the **Department of Planning and Cooperation (DPC) of the MOH of Lao People's Democratic Republic**, pointed out that nutrition is high on the agenda of the government and that since 2018 there have been efforts and investments towards establishing nutrition monitoring, which thanks to NIS have been directed towards adopting a more sustainable approach by strengthening routine monitoring. While recalling that the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down some of the government progress, mostly at local level, commitment and ambitions remain strong to continue to progress.

On behalf of the **Department de Suivie et Evaluation, Programme National de Nutrition (S&E PNN) of Republic of Cote d'Ivoire**, National Nutrition Programme Director Kouame Oka René took the opportunity to underline in particular the importance that improving

indicators plays towards improving results, and highlighted that the NIS has been supporting greatly the MOH in the work aimed at improving the quality of data. It was also pointed out that the government is ambitious about the nutrition goals and is planning to scale it up within primary health care across all levels, from district to national level.

Nutrition Director Masresha Tessema spoke on behalf of the **Ethiopian Federal MOH and the Ethiopian Public Health Institute**, highlighting that nutrition has been high on the agenda of the government since 2008, when the first national nutrition policy was launched. Since then, the focus of the government shifted to embed a more sensitive approach, which is fully reflected in the first Nutrition Policy (launched in 2018), along with the recognition of the food system component in line with the global agenda. The NIS and the work on *nutrition information transformation* is a flagship initiative for the federal government that can be also instrumental to achieve the national goals of building a decision-making system and utilization of resources based on evidence.

On behalf of the **MOH of the Republic of Zambia**, Chief Nutrition Officer Dorothy Sikazwe took the opportunity to share that the government had been working on and generally improving the indicators of the Health

Management Information System (HMIS) when the NIS gave them the technical and funding opportunity to greatly further this work, integrating nutrition specific and sensitive indicators into the system. It was highlighted that exemplary of the progress is that for instance for acute malnutrition there used to be an ad-hoc database to inform policy, which is now routinely incorporated into the main system.

Senior Nutritionist Laura Ahumuza took the floor on behalf of the **MOH of the Republic of Uganda** and spoke about the ultimate goal of the government effort, which is to have nutrition data that can fully inform programming, and as part of the progress to achieve this, thanks to the support provided by NIS, the HMIS is now able to monitor performance of nutrition indicators.

All representatives shared remarks about how data quality is a challenge particularly affecting the quality of nutrition programming, while acknowledging that conscious efforts have been made and that progress made under this project shows how important it is to continue on this path and to achieve more.

The remarks were closed by thanking the EC-NIS project, the EC, UNICEF and WHO for the contribution given to strengthening NISs and by renewing the commitment to the information system's transformation.

Hian and her daughter Nana visited the clinic in Sanamxai, Sanamxai district, Attapeu province, Lao PDR. where Nana was diagnosed with moderate acute malnutrition.

3

Project implementation in countries: achievements, learning and spotlight activities

Presented by:
Thepphouthone Sorsavanh (MOH Laos);
Dr Kouame Ethmonia (S&E PNN Cote d'Ivoire);
Dr. Tarekegn Negese (M&E MOH Ethiopia);
Laura Ahumuza (MOH Uganda);
Martin Liyungu (MOH Zambia, NIS)

Continuing from the preparation work for the National Review Workshops and the outcomes of these, each Project Country team presented the status of their project and the work done during Year 2 (2021).

All presentations followed a structured format that had been developed by the Project Steering Committee and that focused on the key following topics.

3.1 Introduction of the members of the Country Steering Committee (CSC) and Technical Working Group (TWG)

- **Members of the CSCs** across the five countries include representatives of sector organizations, Government agencies, UN agencies, universities with food science and nutrition science programmes, civil societies and international NGOs, and nutrition platforms.

- **Members of the TWGs** include representatives of sector organizations, universities with food science and nutrition science programmes, Government agencies and international research institutes.

The table below recalls the roles and responsibilities of the two bodies within the project organizational set-up:

Country Steering Committee (CSC)	Roles and responsibilities
• A senior representative of the MOH • WHO country representative or designate and UNICEF Chief of Nutrition • Member of the EC country delegation • Other relevant actors in the country (government ministries/institutions, development actors, such as NIPN, FAO, WFP)	• Strategic oversight of the project's implementation and advise TWG • Convene stakeholders' meetings to introduce and discuss the project and actions needed to establish/strengthen the NIS • Meet every six months with the TWG to review, discuss and approve the annual workplan of the project • Oversight to TWG in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the project. • Advise on or address any risks that could undermine the project's success • Play a significant role in advocacy and visibility of the project
Technical Working Group (TWG)	**Roles and responsibilities**
• Nutrition focal point of the MOH • Representation from health/nutrition information systems WHO and UNICEG technical focal points • Technical staff from other government agencies (members from nutrition-sensitive areas/ministries such as maternal & child health; water sanitation; education; and development actors, such as NIPN; DHIS2 focal point; SUN focal point; etc.)	• Responsible for implementation of all project-related technical activities • Responsible for the design of the actions required to strengthen the country NIS in consultation with the Steering Committee. • Assist the CSC in organizing and preparing meetings, and document processes and outcomes of the meetings • Organize national workshops to review existing NIS and areas that required support • Conduct a review of the country NIS/HMIS • Review and refine existing data collection mechanism • Review and develop all technical documents and tools • Develop a PIP and SOP • Training of health workers on nutrition data collection and management, and training policy makers and programme managers on the use of nutrition data • Provide/ensure need-based IT support for data management. • Enhanced advocacy and communications for the project • Assess the quality of nutrition data collected through the NIS

3.2   Achievements against planned activities for Year 2 (2021)

The tables below summarize the status of the activity implementation, main achievements and key learning points as each Project Country presented them.

Overall, the implementation of the activities planned for 2021 is on track in all countries, with most activities completed or undergoing as planned during Q4 of the year, apart from very few exceptions where activities have been rescheduled.

LAOS PDR			
#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
Output 1: Revised national nutrition monitoring frameworks (using DHIS2) filling in major nutrition data gaps			
1	Recruitment of staff and TAs	Delayed	Completed by UNICEF and in process by WHO
2	Mapping of nutrition data in DHIS2	Completed	
3	Workshop to review nutrition data mapping	Completed	
4	Consultative meetings for RMNCAH	Completed	
5	Convene quarterly HMIS coordinating committee mtg	Delayed	Temporarily suspended due to Covid-19 and replanned for 2022
Output 2: Refined/new data collection systems for existing HMIS including a nutrition module			
6	Consultative meetings for revision in system as per new M&E framework	Completed	
7	Changes to primary data collection tools	Completed	
8	SOP for routine nutrition monitoring	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
9	Consultative meeting to validate proposed changes, SOP	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
10	Printing of registers and data collection tools	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
Output 3: Enhanced human resource capacity for the collection, analysis, interpretation, communication and quality control of nutrition data and for the management of NIS			
11	Dissemination of SOP	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
12	ToT for subnational implementation of SOP and reporting tools	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
13	Training of health facility workers on new reporting formats	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
14	Refresher training of health staff on new reporting formats	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
15	Develop capacity of assessors of the facility based integrated RMNCAH quality assessment	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021

Output 4: Improved IT supported data management systems in line with DHIS2 nutrition module and generating information for programmes and policies

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
16	Revision of data systems on DHIS2 (programming)	On track	Planned for 2022
17	Procure soft and hardware for system set up for RMNCAH indicators	On track	Expected to be completed by Dec 2021
18	Short term consultancy for system set up of RMNCAH indicators	On track	Planned for 2022

COTE D'IVOIRE

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
Output 1: Revised national nutrition monitoring frameworks (using DHIS2) filling in major nutrition data gaps			
1	Organise an initial review workshop of the National Nutrition Information System	Completed	Update of the annual work plan and budgeting of activities 2021
2	Organise a workshop to present the project and report the conclusions of the review workshop to the RDs, SDs	Completed	Adaptation of activities taking into account suggestions from RDs and SDs
Output 3: Enhanced human resource capacity for the collection, analysis, interpretation, communication and quality control of nutrition data and for the management of NIS			
3	Develop, reproduce and disseminate reference documents (guidelines and standards for nutrition data management, data analysis and use manual, protocol...) to providers	Completed	Carried out for the data management procedure manual, through a workshop with 30 participants from various backgrounds and organisations
Output 5: Quality routine/assessment data is comprehensive and available on time			
4	Workshops to consolidate nutrition data in the DHIS2	Completed	By supporting WHO in the consolidation meetings organized by the Directorate of Informatics and Health Information (DIIS) on health data quality

ETHIOPIA

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
Output 1: Revised national nutrition monitoring frameworks (using DHIS2) filling in major nutrition data gaps			
1	Initial review of existing NIS	Completed	NIS assessment report produced, Dissemination workshop conducted, Regional capacity building plan developed

Output 2: Refined/new data collection systems for existing HMIS including a nutrition module

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
2	Conduct initial review of the existing electronic data collection tools (design, availability and reporting status) in the lens of nutrition in HMIS /DHIS2	Completed	National HMIS revision in final stage
3	Designing user friendly data collection tools (both facility and community level)	Delayed	Revision being made, printing is planned for Q4, and distribution will be made early next year

Output 3: Enhanced human resource capacity for the collection, analysis, interpretation, communication and quality control of nutrition data and for the management of NIS

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
4	Training of policy makers and Programme Managers on NIS	On track	Programme managers received and training for Policy Makers in Q4
5	Training of health workers on HMIS/DHIS2 on the updated /developed data collection tools	On track	Planned for Q4 First round training to HMIS & Nutrition focal and Nutrition managers from all regions

Output 4: Improved IT supported data management systems in line with DHIS2 nutrition module and generating information for programmes and policies

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
6	Provide technical support in upgrading DHIS2/UNISE	Completed	Multisectoral nutrition indicators from Six sectors aligned with UNISE indicators in pilot Woredas
7	Support the availability of registers, tally sheets and cards at service delivery points	On track	Tools revised; printing and distribution will be done in Q4

Output 5: Quality routine/assessment data is comprehensive and available on time

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
8	Strengthening data quality checks mechanisms (LQAS, RDQA...) and data quality feedback mechanism at different level	On track	NIS findings dissemination workshop conducted, and capacity building planned for Q4

UGANDA

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update
Output 2: Refined/new data collection systems for existing HMIS including a nutrition module			
1	Review and finalization of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Framework	Completed	Finalized National Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation framework

Output 4: Improved IT supported data management systems in line with DHIS2 nutrition module and generating information for programmes and policies

2	Customisation of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation framework into the HMIS/DHIS2	On track	28 indicators including wasting, breastfeeding, LBW, anemia and iron supplementation Customization of validation rules, however, ongoing
3	Publication of information materials from NIS (HMIS/DHIS2) data	On track	4 bulletins in final review and 1 disseminated 2 policy briefs disseminated 1 newsletter disseminated

Output 7: Improved dissemination of NIS information

4	Presentations by the NIS team given at meetings or events (TWG meetings, Symposiums, Annual performance review meetings)	On track	2 presentations made at the National Nutrition Technical working group meeting 2 presentations made at the M&E TWG meeting 1 Regional presentation at regional performance review meeting 1 presentation made at national MIYCAN launch
5	Develop a national nutrition dashboard in DHIS 2	Completed	National nutrition dashboard developed (but not yet live on the national DHIS2)

ZAMBIA

#	Planned activities for 2021	Status	Update

Output 1: Revised national nutrition monitoring frameworks (using DHIS2) filling in major nutrition data gaps. NIS coordination

1	Hold meetings (2 session for 5 days each) to develop NIS Framework aligned to the existing MOH M & E Framework	Completed	Meeting held in December 2020 to develop NIS implementation plan. Plan currently under implementation.
2	Hold several sessions to lobby to partners to support technical staff, recruiting 30% more Nutrition professionals in the nutrition unit	On track	Currently being implemented through internal MOH consultative meetings and HR development/ recruitment plans
3	Hire a consultant to execute specialized tasks to strengthen NIS implementation	On track	Two local and one external consultants hired (2 by UNICEF and 1 by WHO)
4	Hold quarterly review meetings to track progress of implementation	On track	Internal (country) review meetings held every quarter

5	Develop procurement plan for IT and Tools (Quantify and print the developed/revised data capturing tools and distribute)	Completed	Procurement plan developed and implemented through UNICEF. (Computers, tablets and nutrition registers procured.
6	Develop and adopt TORs for NIS TWG	Completed	TOR developed. The country has NIS M&E core team with representation from MOH National and province levels including UNICEF and WHO. Major activities and updates are made through the Child Health & Nutrition TWG and final endorsement through the main MOH TWG. The MOH M&E TWG submits agenda items to the M&E Country steering committee under the Director, Monitoring and Evaluation.
7	Develop and adopt TORs for NIS Steering Committee	Completed	TOR developed. The NIS project will be implemented through the main MOH M&E Country Steering Committee; presentations will be made as standing item through the cooperating partners meeting.
8	Hold quarterly NIS TWG Meetings	Completed	Quarterly meetings held to review NIS implementation progress and plan for the next quarter

Output 2: Refined/new data collection systems for existing HMIS including a nutrition module

9	Identify/map out the different sources, strategies and related policy documents of nutrition information in the health sector that may have impact on nutrition specific outcomes	Completed	Reviewed essential documents at national, regional level towards prioritization of NIS indicators
10	Identify/map out the different human resource available in the health sector that support management of NIS	Completed	Human resource inventory in place. Nutritionists and M&E staff identified. E4H currently conducting staff training inventory designed to identify in country training gaps and needs
11	Hold a meeting to include missing essential nutrition data elements in DHIS2	Completed	Nutrition data elements identified and integrated into DHIS2 / HMIS; Covering both routine and nutrition in emergencies programming

12	Revise HMIS hard copies data capturing tools (e.g. registers, tally sheets, growth charts, BMI) to include revised essential nutrition data element	Completed	Registers, daily activity sheets, HIA 1 & HIA 2 forms revised integrating all proposed nutrition data elements. Rolled out and in use in all 116 districts
13	Pre-test HMIS hard copies data capturing tools (e,g registers, tally sheets, growth charts, BMI) to include revised essential nutrition data element	Completed	Pretesting not done since the tools were just revised and adopted for use.
14	Train service providers (PHO relevant staff, DHO relevant staff, Health facility staff) in the new tools	Completed	Orientation of SHIOs conducted. These later oriented district staff who in turn-oriented facility staff on the new tools.

Output 3: Refined Nutrition Module in Existing HMIS

15	Revise HMIS data capturing tools in DHIS2 software to include revised essential nutrition data element	Completed	HMIS modules within DHIS2 revised according to proposed NIS recommendations. Additional dashboards introduced within DHIS2
16	Pre-test HMIS data capturing tools in DHIS2 software to include revised essential nutrition data element	Completed	All 116 districts using the revised forms for data entry and reporting
17	Review and adopt scope for digital data collection programmes/applications	On track	First pilot focusing on general data collection using e-Register conducted. Need to conduct separate pilot focusing on nutrition data collection only
18	Create nutrition dataset and dashboard in DHIS2	On track	Priority NIS indicators can now be viewed using the following Dashboards - A1 KPI; - D8 Nutrition Child; - D8 Nutrition pregnant. Awaiting finalization of IMAM dashboard
19	Develop nutrition HMIS training package	On track	Started. NIS training package currently under review

Output 4: Enhanced human resource capacity for the management of NIS (collection, analysis, interpretation, communication and quality control of nutrition data)

20	Training of MOH, PHO and DHO in management of nutrition programs and use of nutrition information	On track	Orientation on Nutrition data elements and indicators after the DQA. Main focus will be on nutrition data interpretation and use
21	Training of health facility staff in M&E and nutrition information management	On track	Orientation of DHIOs in nutrition data elements and indictors in 17 districts with 100% of facilities (total of 625 facilities

Output 6: Availability of quality and timely routine data collections in health center

22	Develop a validation protocol/process for routine nutrition data collected in health centers	On track	Validation protocol drafted
23	Conduct baseline assessment on nutrition data quality and use	Completed	Baseline assessment done by E4H project prior to inception of the NIS project
24	Conduct quarterly data quality and audit assessment at facility and district level	On track	Nutrition DQA done in the 17 selected SUN 2 districts. Currently the team is writing the DQA report

Output 7: Improved dissemination of NIS information

25	Develop visibility plan	Completed	Visibility plan developed
26	Produce/adopt communication and visibility materials - videos, pop-ups, graphics, social sites, etc.	On track	Procurement of Flyer and pop-up banners in process
27	Hold virtual quarterly meetings to disseminate current reports on NIS	On track	Dissemination done during Technical Working Group meetings
28	Hold various visibility and advocacy activities	On track	Advocacy done during Technical Working Group meetings and other for a such as CP meetings

3.3 Good Practices

In addition to the above, the Project country teams below have identified and shared **good practices and key learning points** on methodological, programming or more operational issues:

LAOS

- Use of DHIS2 for creating dashboard
- Use of NIPN platforms for improving access to nutrition information and sharing analysis of data.

COTE D'IVOIRE

- Data extraction guide and data consistency guide
- Final versions of tools for nutrition module from HQ
- Need for a project team dedicated solely to the management of the project.

ETHIOPIA

- The Unified Nutrition Information System (UNISE) combines nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive indicators which are aligned to the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2), it has been piloted and lessons learnt are being used to scale up to other Woredas through online mode using the Ethio-telecom infrastructure expansion
- High-level leadership is provided by MOH for the comprehensive NIS assessment through establishment of team of experts (and engagement of expertise including directors) in the assessment, disseminations workshops and implementation of recommendations
- National level NIS assessment, dissemination workshop and used the findings for priority of actions
- Seqota Declaration has used the UNISE routine data for the Impact Assessment of the Innovation Phase of the program.

UGANDA

- The MOH leadership at national level has been key for success of NIS by ensuring the following:
  - Facilitating coordination among partners (TWG): UNICEF, WHO, USAID and WFP
  - Facilitating intra-sectoral coordination among other MOH relevant departments (DHI and RRH)
  - Ensuring timely coordination meetings are held regularly.
  - Development and review of Joint work plan and NIS related tools
- Appropriately customized nutrition indicators in the system eases development of dashboards and data use at all levels.

ZAMBIA

Lessons related to *"Integrated nutrition data elements and indicators into HMIS process".*

Specific lessons related to *"Integrated nutrition data elements and indicators into HMIS process".*

Utilization of existing structured leveraged NIS implementation

- Utilization of existing structured leveraged NIS implementation
- Routine and Emergency response data reported
- E4H support leveraged cost for DHIS 2 software updates
- One implementation plan for MOH, UNICEF & WHO.

3.4 Spotlight: zoom in on one key achievement

In Laos, one key achievement was the **nutrition indicators have been reviewed and included in the Health Information Management System for greater harmonization with the broader nutrition data system of the country**.

The DHIS2 was used to create the dashboard and NIPN platforms for improving access to nutrition information and sharing the analyses of data.

The process started with the formation of the TWG for the EC-NIS, which worked through the existing RMNCAH Technical Group platforms to initiate review and revision process. Nutrition-related indicators were identified across the different strategic objectives of the RMNCAH strategy that was under revision. The TWG convened and reviewed the proposed indicators, made required revisions and presented them at different meetings for each strategic objective.

LAO PDR

In Laos, one key achievement was the **Review of nutrition indicators included in the Health Information Management System**.

The process started with the formation of the TWG for the EC-NIS, which worked through the existing RMNCAH Technical Group platforms to initiate review and revision process. Nutrition-related indicators were identified across the different Strategic Objectives of the RMNCAH Strategy that was under revision. The TWG convened and reviewed the proposed indicators, making required revisions and presenting them at the different meetings for each Strategic Objective.

Figure 1: Example of a Nutrition Dashboard in DHIS2, Lao PDR
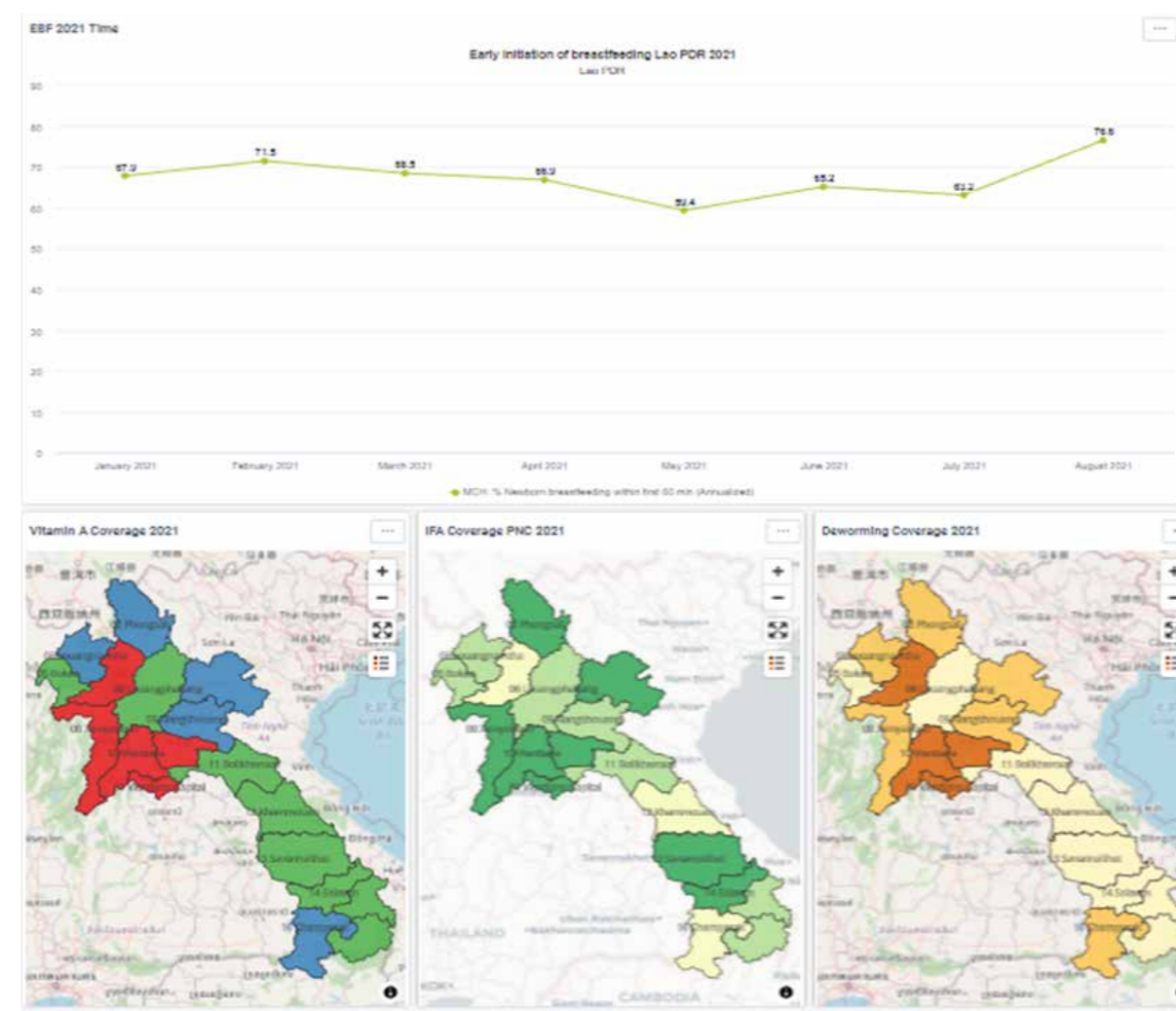
COTE D'IVOIRE

In Cote d'Ivoire, the key achievement was the **Development of a procedure manual for nutritional data management**.

The manual offers a complete and consistent matrix and a guide on the extraction of data, enhancing understanding of nutrition indicators and their calculation.

As a result of the production of the manual, monthly meetings on nutrition data validation are held using the extraction guide, and overall completeness and timeliness of nutritional data have improved.

Lessons learned that could benefit other countries are as follows:
- The diversity of the participants in terms of profile and level of intervention (peripheral level vs. central level and data managers vs. data users) allowed for more in-depth exchanges;
- The existence of a national health data management manual facilitated the development of the draft;

- The development of the manual highlighted the differences in understanding of the indicators.

ETHIOPIA

The spotlight activity in Ethiopia is the contribution of the EC-NIS project to strengthen the **Unified Nutrition Information System (UNISE)**. UNISE is a multi-sectoral nutrition data management tool that captures nutrition specific data through the health data management system (DHIS2) as well as nutrition sensitive data from the other sectors through the DHIS2; the system was already in place before the start of the NIS project.

The system works either online or offline and is currently being piloted in 20 Woredas, in 8 Seqota Declarations[2] Innovation Phase Woredas and 12 Woredas in other areas; it is planned to be expanded to 186 Woredas.

The dashboard with graphs and visuals allows comparison, analysis and interpretation of data at all levels. Below is a screenshot of UNISE report (Seqota Declaration Woredas):

Figure 2: Screenshot of a Nutrition Dashboard in the DHIS2 Instance of the UNISE report (Seqota Declaration Woredas), Ethiopia
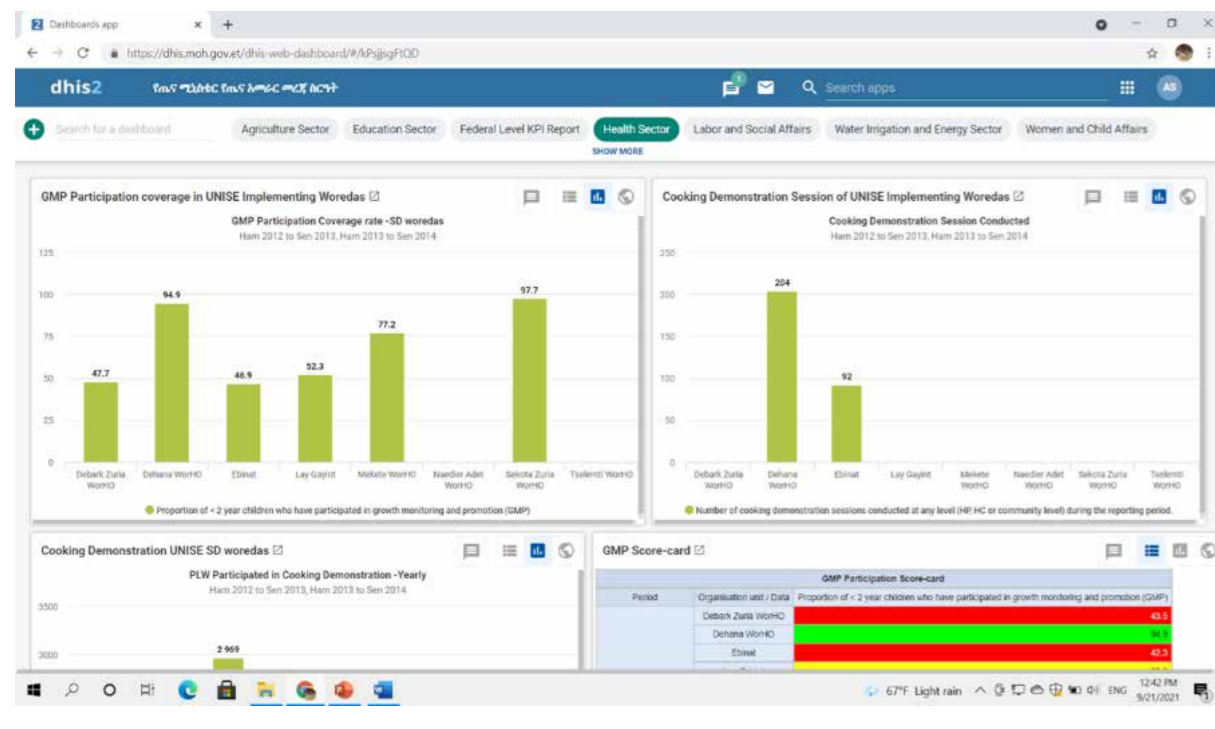
2   The Seqota declaration is the Government of Ethiopia's commitment to ending stunting in children under 2 years by 2030, targeting specific Woredas. Find more here: https://www.bigwin.org/nm_pent_bigwp/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ExtendedNote.pdf

UNISE is using the same platform of the national DHIS2 as the multi-sectoral nutrition coordination in the MOH.

The figure below shows an example of UNISE data visualization of a nutrition sensitive indicator collected from other sectors.

Figure 3: Example of UNISE data visualization of a nutrition sensitive indicator collected from other sectors through UNISE in Ethiopia.

UGANDA

In Uganda, the key achievement reported was the **Customization of the National nutrition monitoring and evaluation framework in the DHIS2**.

In 2014, for the first time, Uganda had nutrition data elements added as an addendum in the HMIS reporting tools; however, data elements/indicators for management of acute malnutrition among other indicators were not included. In 2018, UNICEF supported the revision of the HMIS, where most of the nutrition data elements were integrated in the Outpatient Department (OPD) 105 and Inpatient Department (IPD) 108 monthly reports. However, several gaps hindered nutrition data quality and use for monitoring, budgeting and planning of nutrition programmes (i.e. indicators in the national M&E framework

were not appropriately customized in DHIS2; poor indicator definitions; legends for acute malnutrition indicators as per the Sphere targets not included; dashboards with absent data not allowing quick visualisation.

To improve data utilization and M&E, the national nutrition M&E framework has been appropriately customized in the system and accompanied by visuals such as dashboards; colour legends for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) performance indicator targets have been added.

Below is the process that was followed to achieve the customization of the nutrition M&E framework in the DHIS2 and the development of the nutrition dashboard using customized indicators to facilitate data visualization and use:

Figure 4: The process was followed to achieve the customization of the nutrition M&E framework in the DHIS2 and the development of the nutrition dashboard in Uganda.

| Stakeholder meeting to review and refine national nutrition and monitoring evaluation framework | DHI, MoH Nutrition team and UNICEF customized the Finalised National Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in the DHIS2 | National Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Customized in the DHIS2 | Nutrition dashboard developed using the customized indicators to aid visualization and data use |

ZAMBIA

The spotlight activity in Zambia was the **Integrated nutrition data elements and indicators into HMIS process**, which is directly linked to Output 2 *"Integrated nutrition data elements and indicators into HMIS process"*.

The background was inadequate availability of quality and reliable nutrition data to effectively inform policy and inadequate country capacity to monitor nutrition programmes due to limited routine nutrition data available, inadequate human resource capacity to report, interpret and utilize nutrition data for planning at various levels of programme implementation.

The process of how the activity was carried out starting from Planning, continuing with Analysis, Design, Implementation, and producing such Results, as well as identified Lessons learnt, are captured as follows:

Figure 5: The process for integrating nutrition data elements and indicators into the HMIS in Zambia

Planning
- Formed NIS Country team
- Identified structures for NIS Implementation
- Developed PIP

Analysis
- Reviewed Country Nutrition data needs
- Reviewed MOH, CRF, SADC & other M&E frameworks
- Identified data needs for routine program and emergency response

Design
- NIS Consultative meetings
- Redesigned data capturing tools (hard copies)
- Redesigned HMIS forms in DHIS2
- Defined indicator targets
- Developed additional nutrition dashboards

Implementation
- Oriented Provincial and district staff (virtual)
- Deployed hard copy tools
- Deployed revised electronic DHIS2 forms

Results
- All 116 districts reporting using revised tools
- Report submission rate above 95%
- GMP, IYCF, Micronutrient & IMAM reported on
- Dashboard visualization using new tools
- Increase in number of clients reached by nutrition programs e.g SAM and MAM admissions

Lessons Learned
- Utilization of existing structured leveraged NIS implementation
- Routine and Emergency response data reported
- E4H support leveraged cost for DHIS2 software updates
- One joint implementation plan for MOH, UNICEF & WHO

3.5 Main planned activities for Year 3 (2022)

Each Project country presented their main planned activities from the workplan of Year 3 (2022), summarized here below:

LAOS

1. Convene quarterly HMIS coordinating committee meeting
2. ToT for subnational implementation of SOP and reporting tools
3. Training of health facility workers on new reporting formats
4. Refresher training of health staff on new reporting formats
5. Develop capacity of assessors of the facility based integrated RMNCAH quality assessment
6. Revision of data systems on DHIS2 (programming)
7. Short term consultancy for system set up of RMNCAH indicators
8. Development of system to draw data from existing data systems
9. Training on the use of the DHIS2 Platform for Sentinel Surveillance Monitoring
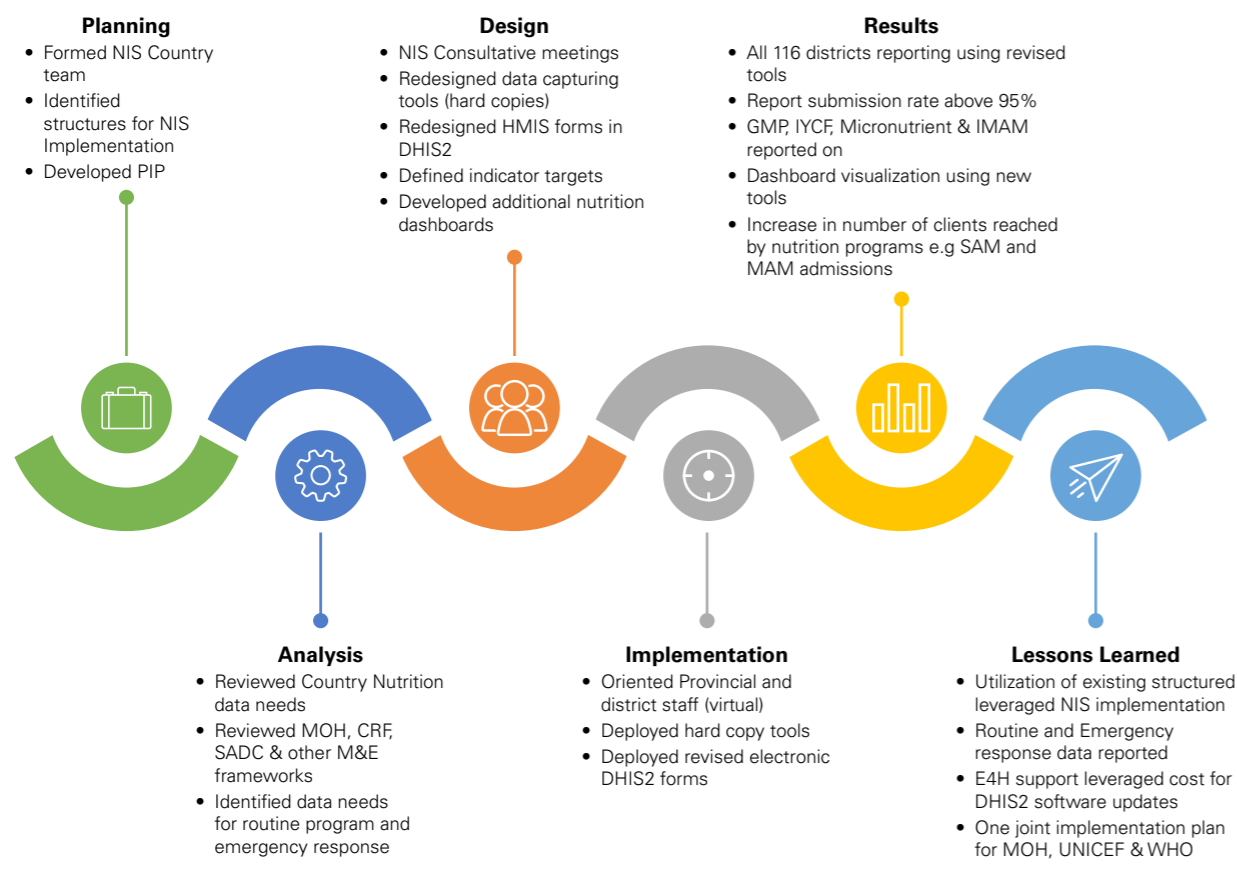10. Performance/progress review meetings conducted/Data dissemination Meeting
11. Communication and visibility including printing, translations and other contractual services

COTE D'IVOIRE

1. Integrate the WHO nutrition module into the DIHS2
2. Set up modules, dashboards and scorecards, module tracker, for existing nutrition data in DHIS2
3. Coaching 226 CSEs (Chargé de la Surveillance Epidémiologique / Officer in charge of Epidemiological surveillance at health regional or health district level) and Cnut (Chargé de Nutrition/ Nutrition Officer at health regional or health district level) in the health districts in the management of routine nutrition data and the use of the nutrition module in the DHIS2 platform

4. Support the establishment of an early warning system (EWS) for nutrition surveillance through the revision of the IRMS reporting frameworks and disseminate the procedures
5. Develop, reproduce and disseminate the data analysis and use manual to providers
6. Strengthen the capacity of service providers in priority districts to develop and use dashboards for monitoring nutrition indicators for decision making
7. Strengthen the capacity of district management teams and the Regional Health Team to analyse nutrition data during regular coordination meetings to guide decision making
8. Equip 71 sentinel sites with computer equipment (tablets, desktop, laptop; Wi-Fi box and internet connection) for data management
9. Strengthen the capacity of the 3 NIPN data managers to analyse nutrition data and produce periodic reports on the nutrition situation
10. Strengthen the capacity of the 3 Direction de l'informatique et de l'information sanitaire/ Health Informatics and Information Direction data managers to analyse nutrition data and produce periodic reports on the nutrition situation
11. Strengthen the capacity of the Regional Health Departments and District Health Departments to conduct nutrition data quality audits and reviews
12. Conducting nutrition data quality audits (LQAS, DQS)
13. Supporting workshops to consolidate nutrition data in the DHIS2
14. Carry out 1 national feedback sessions on the results of routine nutritional surveillance (meeting with Regional Health Departments and District Health Departments)
15. Develop and disseminate a quarterly newsletter on the nutritional situation
16. Communication on different digital networks
17. Support the development of a quarterly newsletter at the HD level on the nutritional situation.

ETHIOPIA

1 Continue capacity building through Training, IT, and Support the availability of registers, tally sheets and cards at service delivery points

2 Training of health workers on HMIS/DHIS2 on the updated /developed data collection tools

3 Organize high level advocacy and Training for policy makers and Program Managers on NIS

4 Provide support in scale up of DHIS2/UNISE and UNISE will be also customized with the recent version. Updated version of UNISE will be developed by December 2021.

5 Establish/strengthen nutrition data sharing platform including nutrition Dashboard at all levels

6 Conduct two supportive supervision from Federal Ministry of Health to all regions.

UGANDA

1 Conduct refresher regional trainings on DHSI2/HMIS in nutrition and development of nutrition dashboards

2 Conduct nutrition data related support supervision, on job coaching and mentorship on nutrition HMIS/DHIS2)

3 Development and pretesting of the nutrition Data Quality audit tool

4 Conduct quarterly nutrition data quality audits

5 Convening of the annual nutrition symposium

6 Support the MOH with the development, and dissemination of quarterly nutrition bulletins, briefs and newsletters

7 Organize quarterly and annual regional nutrition performance review meeting

8 Convene a workshop to carry out mid-term review of the NIS project

9 Conduct a workshop to develop the Nutrition programme scorecard

10 Support coordination between the core staff from NIPN and the NIS project through the organization of semi-annual meetings.

ZAMBIA

Output 3: Refined Nutrition Module in Existing HMIS

1 Review and adopt scope for digital data collection programmes/applications

2 Update nutrition dataset and dashboards in DHIS2

3 Conduct data migration from IMAM database to DHIS2.

Output 4: Enhanced human resource capacity for the management of NIS (collection, analysis, interpretation, communication and quality control of nutrition data)

4 Develop nutrition HMIS training package

5 Integrate Nutrition training package into the main HMIS manual for use in training health care workers in NIS management

6 Training of key personnel in M&E and nutrition at MOH, Provincial Health Office, District Health Office in NIS management

7 Review and update WHO nutrition module on " management of nutrition programs and using nutrition information "

8 Review pre and in-services training curricula in nutrition information management for targeted institutions

9 Support and strengthen the nutrition (anthropometry) component of other large surveys such as VAC, SMART surveys (activities to include capacity building of GRZ staff).

Output 6: Availability of quality and timely routine data collections in health center

10 Orient the users on utilization of the digital platform for data capture, nutrition focused dashboard for monitoring and reporting nutrition programmes.

Output 7: Improved dissemination of NIS information

11 Produce/adopt communication and visibility materials - videos, pop-ups, graphics, social sites, etc.

Malado Diarra, 1, is fed by her mother.

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3.6 Technical assistance required

At the end of their presentations, the country teams also took the chance to highlight the activities and tasks on which they mostly would need technical support from the Project Steering Committee:

LAOS

• Final versions of tools for nutrition module from HQ.

ETHIOPIA

• Technical assistance for the review of the UNISE indicators and development of data elements and reporting tools

• Technical assistance in the development of dashboard.

UGANDA

• Review of the Nutrition data quality tool

• Customization and pretesting for the push report for nutrition indicators in the DHIS2

• Piloting the reporting through the DHIS2 in lower health facilities.

ZAMBIA

• Coordination: Support short term consultancy on specialized tasks related to coordination

• Nutrition Module within DHIS: Learning from other countries implementing NIS

• Capacity Building:
  - Support review of draft NIS training materials
  - Validate pre-service NIS training materials (case studies etc.)
  - Support development of e-Learning modules on NIS.

Marcel, 5, eats his favorite food, rice with eggplant sauce and fish.

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4

EC-NIS and NIPN: A joint collaboration

Presented by Juliane Pfuhl (C4N-NIPN Global Support, GIZ) and Dr. Elisa Dominguez Muriel (EC-NIS, WHO Technical Officer, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety)

The session emphasized how the EC-NIS project and the NIPN project collaborate at country and global levels (the session contributed to the expected output of the meeting "To discuss collaboration within the partnership between the EC-NIS project and NIPN at country and global level").

ABOUT THE NIPN INITIATIVE

The NIPN aims to support EU partner countries with a high burden of undernutrition that are committed to deliver progress and action to scale up nutrition and participate in the SUN Movement to set up an analytical platform to better inform policies for nutrition. The EC's "Sustainable Agri-Food Systems" Programme aims at improved food and nutrition security in EU partner countries. Under the programme, the NIPN initiative has been granted a second funding; the current platform implementation will be extended from 2022 to 2024 in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Laos, Niger and Uganda, and will be started it in Mali. Since 2018, UNICEF has been involved in phase I of NIPN by providing technical support in Ivory Coast, Laos and Uganda. In the forthcoming phase II, UNICEF will play this role also in Burkina Faso and Kenya and continue in Laos, Ivory Coast and Uganda. UNICEF's Action falls under the current collaboration between the EU and Germany within the global initiative Capacity for Nutrition (C4N), which is being implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to provide global support to NIPN countries. The Action will be implemented by UNICEF in coordination with GIZ and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE) under the Common Results Framework (CRF) of NIPN-II.
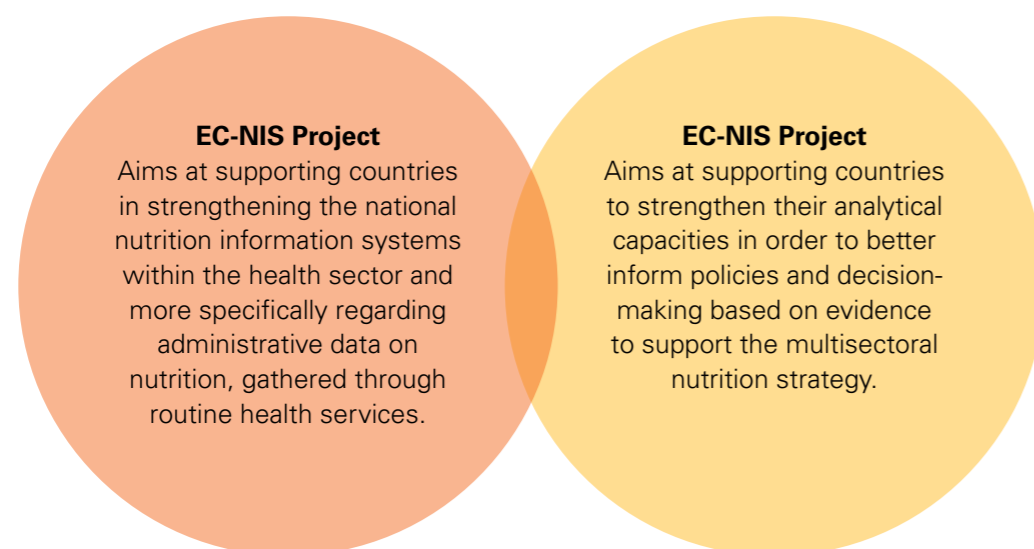
A NIPN is rooted within existing institutions and national multisectoral coordination systems for nutrition. From the analysis of available and shared data, it generates evidence that is used by (sub-)national stakeholders for developing policy, designing programmes and allocating investments, through 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 analysis of the data.

In each country, the partners involved in hosting the NIPN data and policy components receive financial support from EU Delegations as well as guidance and technical support from the C4N to implement their national platform.

The EC-NIS project and NIPN Initiative are complementary in their objectives and approaches both at country and global levels, focusing respectively the EC-NIS project on strengthening national nutrition information systems within the health sector and more specifically on administrative data, while the NIPN initiative focus is on evidence to support the multisectoral nutrition strategies:

EC-NIS Project
Aims at supporting countries in strengthening the national nutrition information systems within the health sector and more specifically regarding administrative data on nutrition, gathered through routine health services.

EC-NIS Project
Aims at supporting countries to strengthen their analytical capacities in order to better inform policies and decision-making based on evidence to support the multisectoral nutrition strategy.

The two projects are interconnected in the process of using quality data to guide programming and improve decision-making and collaborate operationally and capitalize at outcome level through mechanisms that are active at country and global level.

- At country level, the projects contribute to joint work on indicators for DHIS2 and other joint activities (such as in Laos and Ethiopia), they are part of coordinated monitoring mechanisms of the National Nutrition Programmes (such as in Laos, Ethiopia and Uganda), and organize coordination meetings between the two projects (such as in Uganda).
- At global level, the coordination mechanism between the two projects was set in 2020, meeting every two months and offering the opportunity to discuss concrete collaboration on outputs and country outcomes. Technical documents for global guidance are exchanged for reciprocal inputs, and the project staff jointly participate in global events (such as the case of this Annual Gathering).

In order to further enhance collaboration in the medium-term, more activities have been identified:

- At country level:
  - Revision of National Monitoring Frameworks filling major nutrition data gaps;
  - Towards centralising, collating and harmonising multisectoral data;
  - Guidance on the use of routine monitoring data from sectors;
  - Synergies in capacity development activities along the data value chain;
  - Coordination in improved IT supported Data Management System in line with DHIS2 Nutrition Module;
  - Towards availability of quality and timely data from routine data collections in health centres and surveys and integration into NIPN platform;
  - Towards improved dissemination of NIS information.

- At global level:
  - Joint communication and advocacy activities;
  - Joint technical trainings and strategic webinars;
  - Capitalisation and learning strategies, e.g. case studies;
  - Capacity development support.

Given the great potential catered by their complementarity, the Project Country teams of both projects were invited to reflect on their current level of collaboration and on if & how it could be strengthened further.

The session was an important opportunity to emphasise once more in front of all relevant stakeholders that the EC-NIS and NIPN are different projects working with the common goal of improving information on nutrition, with different ways of working, and that the teams are collaborating to avoid any overlapping and to build on their respective strengths to enhance nutrition information in the partner countries.

Children eat lunch in Mbandza.

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5

Updates from HQ: Products available to the project teams

Presented by Chika Hayashi, Senior Advisor Statistics and Monitoring, UNICEF DAPM

The **Guide on National Nutrition Information Systems (NNIS) - The Fundamental Series** was released the day before the Meeting.
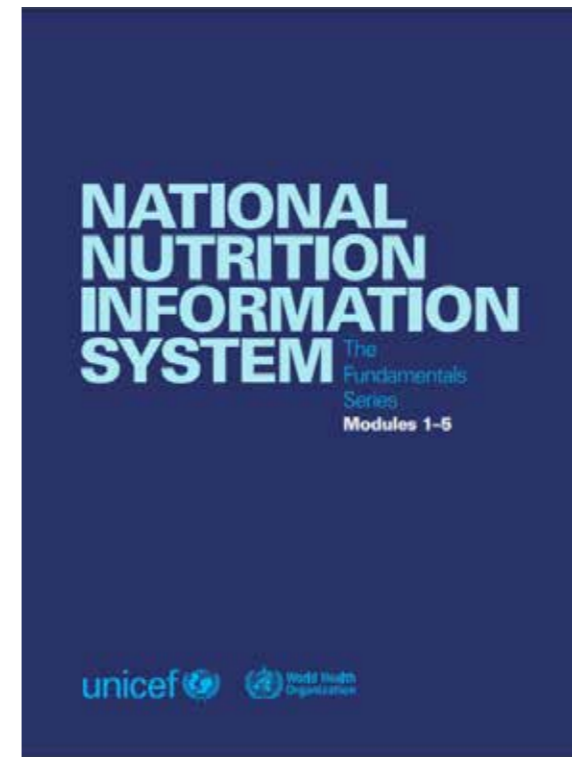
The Guide includes 5 fundamental modules which introduce to the core concepts of an NNIS (*i.e. What is an NNIS? How does an NNIS support a country's nutrition programmes? What is needed to build a useful NNIS? What are the main attributes of an NNIS? What are the main types of data used in an NNIS?*).

An **E-course** has been also developed to cover the information in the NNIS Fundamental Series and has 4 modules:

1. An introduction to NNIS
2. Enhancing the effectiveness and usefulness of an NNIS
3. NNIS data
4. The NNIS data value chain

The e-course will be delivered through UNICEF's Global Hub for Learning, Agora.

In addition, **Technical Notes** provide more detailed technical information about individual aspects and/or issues related to developing and implementing a NNIS.

Two NNIS Technical Notes have been issued so far:

• Technical note 01, focused on supporting assessments which ascertain on how the system is working and can be improved;

• Technical note 02, aimed to help understand, develop or refine the nutrition data value chain for the NNIS.

It is expected that 15 additional technical notes will be released during Year 3 (2022), with topics including: *Building a practical set of nutrition indicators; Costing, budgeting and financing; Reconciling and triangulating nutrition data; Data quality assurance; Data visualization.*

Requests, experiences and inputs will be most welcome as a Technical Note may be developed to address a specific need or disseminate a good practice.

Furthermore, an **Administrative Data Guide** to support countries in the design and implementation of routine administrative reporting systems for nutrition will be launched soon between December and January 2022. The recommendations are software-agnostic.
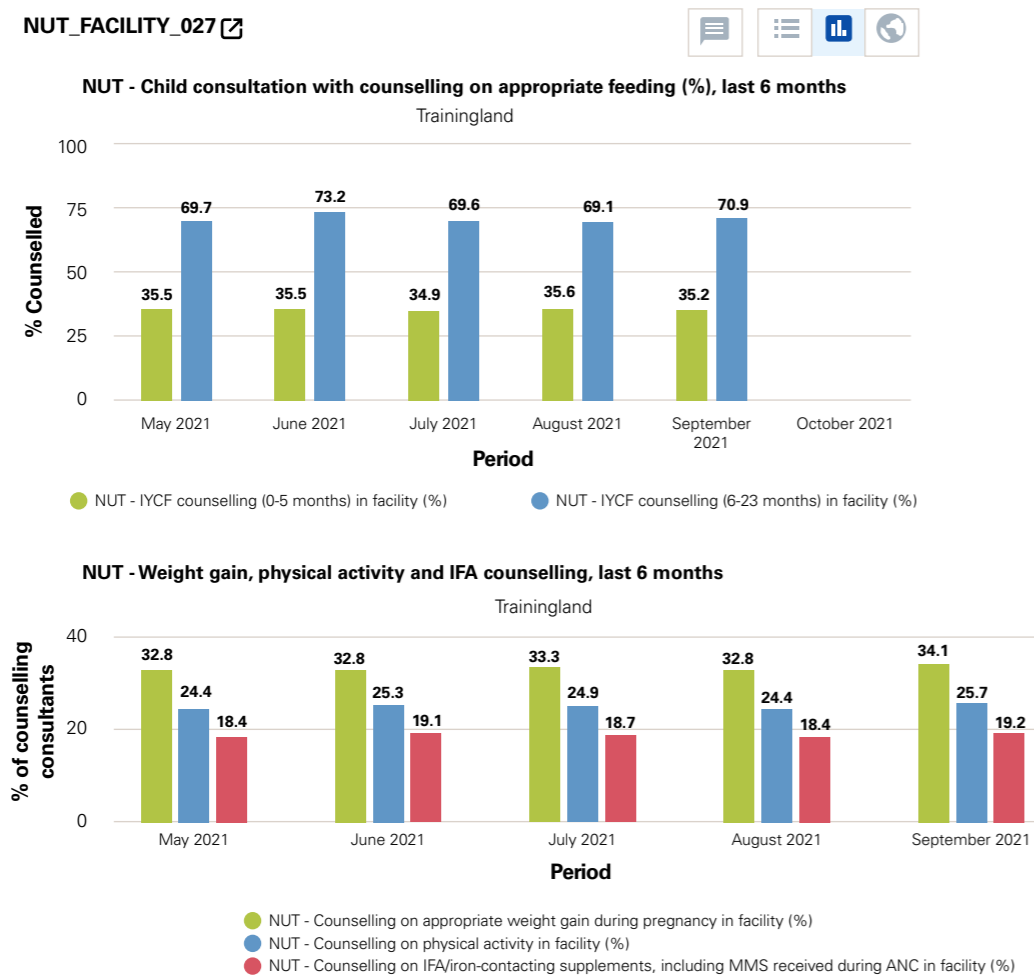
The guide will cover:

- Recommended maternal and child nutrition indicators;
- Key data elements;
- Data use/interpretation examples and can be used when reviewing patient registers and reporting forms, DHIS2, indicator sets and monitoring frameworks.

The University of Oslo will launch an updated DHIS2 package which will include the first global **District Health Information System (DHIS2) Standard Nutrition Module**, developed by UNICEF and WHO with support from technical experts. The final bug-free version of the software is schedule to be released in Spring 2022.

Modules included: Growth Monitoring and Promotion; Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling; Maternal Nutrition Counselling; Micronutrients; Management of wasting and severe wasting; Emergency Response (cross cutting).

These tools will support countries in the design and implementation of routine administrative reporting systems for nutrition. Below is an example of data visualization from DHIS2:

Figure 7: Example of data visualisation in the DHIS2 Nutrition Module

NUT_FACILITY_027

NUT - Child consultation with counselling on appropriate feeding (%), last 6 months

Trainingland

Period	NUT - IYCF counselling (0-5 months) in facility (%)	NUT - IYCF counselling (6-23 months) in facility (%)
May 2021	35.5	69.7
June 2021	35.5	73.2
July 2021	34.9	69.6
August 2021	35.6	69.1
September 2021	35.2	70.9
October 2021		

% Counselled

NUT - Weight gain, physical activity and IFA counselling, last 6 months

Trainingland

Period	NUT - Counselling on appropriate weight gain during pregnancy in facility (%)	NUT - Counselling on physical activity in facility (%)	NUT - Counselling on IFA/iron-contacting supplements, including MMS received during ANC in facility (%)
May 2021	32.8	24.4	18.4
June 2021	32.8	25.3	19.1
July 2021	33.3	24.9	18.7
August 2021	32.8	24.4	18.4
September 2021	34.1	25.7	19.2

% of counselling consultants

All products, updated information and details are available on: https://uni.cf/nnis

Maman Véronique Etima, 26, prepares dinner in Mbandza.

Emerald Atyang - 3 years 10 months, enjoys a banana after enjoying a nutritious meal for lunch. The food consisted of rice, pumpkin, peas, red vegetables and avocado. Banana is her favorite fruit.

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6

Key next steps for Year 3

Presented by UNICEF Nutrition Specialist Louise Mwirigi, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF HQ

The session informed the audience on the key next steps for Year 3 of the project (2022).

During the first quarter of the year, efforts will concentrate on the following tasks:

- Consolidate information from Project countries to prepare the Workplan for year 3 and budget for the approval of the Project Steering Committee;
- Prepare donor progress and financial report for Year 2, outlining key activities, achievements, progress so far, and ensure accountability;
- Finalize a 2-page document that outlines the collaboration between EC-NIS with NIPN aimed at further strengthening the collaboration.

Focused technical support to countries will continue throughout the year, with priority given to the following:

- Support pilot implementation of nutrition modules within DHIS2;
- Review of nutrition indicators integrated in HMIS/DHIS2 & support to development of reporting tools;
- Technical assistance in the development of nutrition data dashboards;
- Review of the nutrition data quality tool;
- Technical assistance on the customization and piloting the reporting through DHIS2;
- Technical support and training for capacity building of national technical teams as needed.

Drying meat in rural Kyrgyzstan.

7

Q&A: Deepening and discussing

During the Meeting, there were three Q&A sessions, where participants had the chance to exchange feedback, ask for more information and clarify any issues that emerged from the presentations of the country and global teams.

Below are presented the main points of insight and discussion:

UNISE ETHIOPIA raised a lot of interest among the participants.

Q: How does UNISE work in the DHIS2? Given that the organization unit hierarchy in DHIS2 is different for different sectors, did you create a separate instance?

A: Nutrition specific indicators' component is already embedded in the DHIS2 and now we are including nutrition sensitive indicators through a separate form for UNISE in the DHIS2. The nutrition focal points of other sectors are provided with training and user training manuals, and the UNISE platform is set in their computers, which were supplied by the project. They enter data offline and then they send it online. The plan ahead is to shift from offline to online data entering, relying on the improved internet service across the country. The system is aligning to DHIS2, which is already functioning online. Different sectors will be given access/password to enter they own data centrally, and a dashboard will be designed to show

the performance of different sectors on different indicators.

Q: What are examples of nutrition sensitive indicators that are collected from other sectors?

A: We have 69 nutrition sensitive indicators. For instance, one indicator collected by Agriculture is the number of households with homestead gardening; one indicator collected by Health is the number of pregnant women and women with children under 2 attending cooking demonstrations at health posts or farmer training centres; one indicator in Education is the number of schools with home gardening; one indicator collected by Water & Irrigation is the number of households having access to water within 5-10 minutes' walk distance.

Q: Which line minister is hosting the multi-sectoral data?

A: The MOH, including nutrition sensitive data (there are included a lot of nutrition sensitive indicators).

Maman Véronique Etima, 26, eats lunch with her son, Isidor, 13 months, sitting in her lap, and children that she looks after, in Mbandza.

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Two more general questions were asked, which have not received specific answers but raised important reflections that may continue to stimulate the learning process of the Project countries:

1. *The presentations focused pretty much on the work done on the dashboards and system set-up, but it's important to start reflecting upon the actual use of the system for decision-making.*

2. *How the countries have been using the experience from the EC-NIS project to make Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitments to invest in nutrition data?*

EC- NIS and NIPN

Q: What is the performance of countries where there is the NIPN project compared to the ones where there isn't?

A: It would be impossible and not relevant to compare such cases given the specificities of every national context and the type of support received (for instance, Zambia doesn't benefit from NIPN support, but it received support from WHO in the past). The answer would also need to consider under which definition and indicator of "performance" such comparison would be made. Moreover, the SUN Movement is active in every country to support multi-sectoral nutrition. In sum, we cannot say that one country performs better than another because of the presence of NIPN although of course NIPN provides an added value in the ways previously described.

Q: Laos took the chance to share their experience about the collaboration between the two projects.

A: The Project Country team has been trying to work with the MOH and other partners towards removing the project mind-set and project labels and fostering an approach according to which all initiatives and funds as part of the same work-in-progress. Importantly, the effectiveness of NIPN depends on good quality data, for which the EC-NIS is working to build the necessary routine information systems within the health sector.

Q: Are the nutrition sensitive indicators which are reported in the DHIS2 also reported into other sectoral information systems?

A: For now each sector can see/access only their own performance indicators and use it for their own sectoral decision-making. In addition, UNISE generates the report for all sectors and presents it on the occasion of quarterly coordination sectoral meeting at different levels.

Q: Still related to the experience and scope of UNISE, what is the link between NIS and NIPN in Ethiopia?

A: The collaboration is very strong, and both specific and sensitive nutrition data that

are gathered through UNISE are used for analysis of secondary data by NIPN.

PROJECT COUNTRIES

Q: *ZAMBIA*: Is IMAM linked to IPD records in any way?

A: Yes, it is, under all three levels (1st, 2nd and 3rd hospital level).

Q: *UGANDA*: Is there a plan to link the dashboard with the M&E of UNAP II?

A: Yes, the project is deliberately doing so, with the NIPN multi-sectoral coordination data repository being accessible by all stakeholders and pulling from the NIS.

Q: *UGANDA*: Did you include the average of stay or bed occupancy rate for IMAM in the DHIS2?

A: Yes, it is added in OPD monthly reporting.

HQ PRODUCTS AVAILABLE TO THE PROJECT TEAMS

Q: Do these products reflect the consensus of different partners of the WHO-UNICEF TEAM group?

A: The NIS Fundamentals and Technical Notes have been developed with support from international experts in the framework of the TEAM group who has validated the documents.

8 Closing remarks

The representatives of the Ministries of Health and of the Country Steering Committees took the opportunity of the closing remarks to renew the commitment of the governments of Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Laos, Uganda and Zambia to continue working towards the information system's transformation and effectiveness.

On behalf of the Country Steering Committee and **MOH of Laos** which couldn't attend the closing remarks due to the late hour in the country, Prosper Dakurah (UNICEF Programme Specialist) pointed out that they are very ambitious about the activities planned for next year but they hope to be able to speed up the implementation which had to be slowed down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also expressed excitement for the release of the nutrition modules and guidelines, along with the interest in being considered as a pilot country for those.

On behalf of the MOH of **Cote d'Ivoire and Technical Working Group**, it was highlighted the commitment to focus on accelerating the process towards improving quality data both at local and central levels and to empower capacities to do so.

Dr. Masresha Tessema, on behalf of the Ethiopian Federal MOH and the **Ethiopian Public Health Institute**, took the opportunity to point out once more the strong coordination between the EC-NIS and NIPN projects, and confirmed the commitment for 2022 to focus in particular on training and advocacy work towards strengthening the country nutrition information system.

For **Uganda**, Florence Turyashemererwa (UNICEF Nutrition Specialist) highlighted that the biggest gaps remaining in the work in the country are about the decentralization of data and they are confident that with the concerted efforts and commitment will be able to address those.

Dorothy Sikazwe on behalf of the **MOH of Zambia**, highlighted in particular the need in the country and focus of the work ahead to improve further on capacity building, quality of dashboard and use of data to inform programming.

All remarks were closed by thanking the EC-NIS project, the EC, UNICEF and WHO for the support given to strengthening NISs and congratulating the Project Steering Committee for organizing the Annual Gathering Meeting Year 2 and for giving the opportunity to learn from others, to reflect upon good practices and others' experience so to further improve the work during Year 3 of the project.

On behalf of the **European Commission (EC), Directorate-General for International Partnership Green Deal, Digital Agenda Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries**, Xavier Pavard thanked the organizers, participants, ministries for organizing such an important meeting.

Mr. Pavard highlighted that the European Union is an important partner in the fight to malnutrition globally, which remains a priority for the EU programming cycle 2021-2027, also with an important financial allocation; the funding to the EC-NIS project and NIPN initiative is exemplary of such commitment. Fighting malnutrition has become even more pressing after the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic impact on the status of nutrition.

Mr. Pavard commended the impressive participation and contribution of the government authorities to the meeting, encouraging countries to continue to work to further enhance government appropriation and capacity building, in line with the approach and priorities of the EC.

He continued by praising the fundamental importance of events like the Annual Gathering as opportunities to allow exchange of practices, experiences, outcomes from different countries, and appreciated the efforts and promising work that have been done between the NIS project and the NIPN initiative to coordinate at both country and global level and engaging in a joint process of reflection and learning.

The remarks were closed by wishing all the best for the work ahead to ministries and partners and looking forward to participating to the next Annual Gathering in 2022.

Madeline Mona, 5, plants sweet potatoes with her sister (centre) Elma Mona, 8, and their mother, Alice, at their farm in Koli village on Guadalcanal. In the background, Alvin Lewa, Madeline and Elma's cousin, plows using a tractor.

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Closing of the meeting

On behalf of the Project Steering Committee, the two facilitators closed the event by thanking everyone - the presenters and the entire Project country teams, NIPN, UNICEF and WHO colleagues - who participated in the Annual Gathering to make it a success, having actively engaged in the discussion, shared progress and learning and showcased the positive difference that the project is making to National Nutrition Information Systems.

They bid farewell to the participants by wishing everyone the best for another year of work, progress and achievements and looking forward to the next Annual Gathering in 2022.

The complete recording of the Meeting can be accessed at this link:

https://unicef.zoom.us/rec/share/0K0JzOVN460Eg3A9CwFWJfgXVunzPGCJ3tjXhh9f634SIByOr5QILjE_KK-1UUi7.zzCkoj2kykLdrenJ

(pass code: %32c9Gdj)

Annex 1: List of participants

No.	Country	Name	Organisation	Position	Email address
1	Cote d'Ivoire	Kouame Oka rené		National Nutrition Programme Director	reneoka@gmail.com
2	Cote d'Ivoire	M'Bahia –Yao krystel		National Nutrition Programme Deputy Director	ykaham@yahoo.com
3	Cote d'Ivoire	N'Dri Eric-Didier	WHO	WHO Nutrition Technical officer	ndrik@who.int
4	Cote d'Ivoire	Kouame Ethmonia		National Nutrition Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Manager	ethy.kouame@gmail.com
5	Cote d'Ivoire	Dosso Ali	SE-CONNAPE	Monitoring and Evaluation Manager	stpcnnad@gmail.com
6	Cote d'Ivoire	Assemian Ghislain	NIPN	NIPN Strategic Information Advisor	akegislain@gmail.com
7	Cote d'Ivoire	Yecoula Noé		Health Informatics and Information Direction staff	yenoja@gmail.com
8	Cote d'Ivoire	Pongathie Adama		Health Informatics and Information Direction Director	s.pongathie@snis.gouv.ci
9	Cote d'Ivoire	N'Dri Faustin	NIPN	NIPN Manager	ndrifaustin2012@gmail.com
10	Cote d'Ivoire	Koffi Paulin	UNICEF	UNICEF Nutrition Specialist	pkoffi@unicef.org
11	Cote d'Ivoire	Cassy Marius	UNICEF	UNICEF OIC of Chief of Nutrition Section	mcassy@unicef.org
12	Ethiopia	Gemechis Melkamu		Director, HITD	gemechis.melkamu@MOH.gov.et
13	Ethiopia	Dr. Masresha Tessema	EPHI	Nutrition Director	masresha88@gmail.com
14	Ethiopia	Abera Dibabae	MOH	Nutrition Case Team Coordinator (OIC)	hiwot.darsene@MOH.gov.et
15	Ethiopia	Dr Meron Girma	EPHI	Public Health Analyst, NIPN	meron.girma.nipn@gmail.com
16	Ethiopia	Shegaw Mulu	MOH	Senior HIS and M&E advisor	shegawmulu@gmail.com
17	Ethiopia	Tarekegn Negesse	MOH	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	vatk2004@gmail.com
18	Ethiopia	Etsegenet Awash	MOH	Multisectoral Nutrition Information Specialist	etsegenet@gmail.com
19	Ethiopia	Stanley Chitekwe	UNICEF	Chief of Nutrition	schitekwe@unicef.org
20	Ethiopia	Getahun Beyene	WHO	Nutrition Officer	beyeneg@who.int
21	Ethiopia	Yetayesh Maru	UNICEF	Nutrition Specialist	ymaru@unicef.org
22	Ethiopia	Dr Firehiwot Mesfin	UNICEF	Nutrition Specialist	fmengistu@unicef.org
23	Ethiopia	Abiy Tefera	UNICEF	M&E Specialist	atefera@unicef.org
24	Laos	Dr. Chansaly	DPC	Deputy Director General, DPC	hsipchansaly@etllao.com
25	Laos	Dr. Khamseng	CN	Deputy Director Center for Nutrition Unit	khamseng_p@hotmail.com
26	Laos	Dr Saykham Voladet	National Institute of Economic Research	Ag Director General	saykhamv@yahoo.com
27	Laos	Dr. Thep	DPC	Head of HIS	thsorsavanh@gmail.com
28	Laos	Dr. Souphaxay	Center for Nutrition	Nutrition Surveillance Officer	souphaxay.ny1988@gmail.com
29	Laos	Dr. Chankham	MCHC	Deputy Head, HIS	chankham.tbc1979@gmail.com
30	Laos	Vatthana	EU	Program Officer	Vatthana.ATANAPHONE@eeas.europa.eu
31	Laos	Janneke	UNICEF	Nutrition Manager	jblomberg@unicef.org
32	Laos	Dilip	WHO	Technical officer - HIS	hensmand@who.int
33	Laos	Prosper	UNICEF	Programme Specialist - NIPN	pdakurah@unicef.org
34	Laos	Kovalan	UNICEF	Nutrition Monitoring Consultant	kkumaran@unicef.org
35	Laos	Anne Nielsen	UNICEF	Consultant, NIPN	anne.christa.nielsen@gmail.com
36	Uganda	Laura Ahumuza	MOH - Nutrition	Senior Nutritionist, MOH	lahumuza@yahoo.co.uk
37	Uganda	Florence Turyashemererwa	UNICEF	Nutrition Specialist UNICEF	fturyashemererwa@unicef.org
38	Uganda	Sheilla Natukunda	UNICEF	Nutrition Consultant UNICEF	nsheilla@unicef.org
39	Uganda	Phoebe Nabunya	WHO	Nutrition Consultant WHO	nabunyap@who.int
40	Uganda	Dr. Hanifa Bachou	USAID-MCHN-Activity	Technical Director	hbachou@fhi360.org
41	Uganda	Albert Mugabi	Hoima RRH	Senior Nutritionist	albertmugabi1978@gmail.com
42	Uganda	Aggrey Gwaita	Fort Portal RRH	Nutritionist	gwaitaaggrey@yahoo.com
43	Uganda	Amanda Murungi	Mulago NRH	Nutritionist	mrungiamanda@gmail.com
44	Uganda	Dalton Babukiika	Mbarara RRH		babuzodalton@gmail.com
45	Uganda	Miria Twinimugisha	Naguru RRH	Nutritionist	miriatwino@gmail.com
46	Uganda	Okulung Moses	MRO Moroto RRH	Medical Records Officer	okulungmoses@gmail.com

No.	Country	Name	Organisation	Position	Email address
47	Uganda	Musinguzi Joseph Bob	MRO Kiruddu NRH	Medical Records Officer	bobmsngz@gmail.com
48	Zambia	Martin Mzumara	WHO	National Professional Officer Scaling Up Nutrition	mkmzumara@gmail.com
49	Zambia	Chipo Mwela	WHO	National Professional Officer Nutrition	mwelac@who.int
50	Zambia	Dr. Patricia Mupeta Bobo	MOH HQ	Assistant Director Chid Health & Nutrition Unit	drbobopm@gmail.com
51	Zambia	Mr.Trust Mfune	MOH HQ	Chief Monitoring and Evaluation	trust.mufune@MOH.gov.zm
52	Zambia	Ms.Brivine M. Sikapande	MOH HQ	Chief Monitoring and Evaluation	brivine.sikapande@MOH.zm
53	Zambia	Mr.Mwango Mutale	MOH HQ	Principal Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	1mwangom@gmail.com
54	Zambia	Mr.David Ngula	MOH HQ	Principal Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	ngulamd@gmail.com
55	Zambia	Ms.Mildred Tolosi Kaunda	MOH HQ	Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	tolosimildred2017@gmail.com
56	Zambia	Ms.Doreen Bwalya Phiri	MOH HQ	Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	dbwalya80@gmail.com
57	Zambia	Mr.Munsaka Siamwiza	MOH HQ	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	siamwizamunsaka@gmail.com
58	Zambia	Aaron Sinyangwe	MOH HQ	Consultant - District Health Information Officer	sinyangwechi@gmail.com
59	Zambia	Mr.Sitali Mukube	MOH HQ	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	mukubedavid@gmail.com
60	Zambia	Ms.Chumary Munyinya	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer - Western Province	chumarymunyinya@gmail.com
61	Zambia	Mr.Maliseni Mumbuna	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer – North Western Province	mumbunam@yahoo.co.uk
62	Zambia	Mr.Isaac.D.Ngulube	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer - Muchinga Provice	isaaczokongulube@yahoo.com
63	Zambia	Mr.Clive Gosa	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer - Lusaka Province	mwikisa1@gmail.com
64	Zambia	Mr.Malisheni Shibithi Evans	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer - Eastern Province	malishenievans@yahoo.com
65	Zambia	Mr.Bande Ngulube	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer - Luapula Province	ngulubebande@gmail.com

No.	Country	Name	Organisation	Position	Email address
66	Zambia	Mrs.Landa Nambela	Provincial Health Office	Senior Health Information Officer - Southern Province	landanambela@yahoo.com
67	Zambia	Mr.Gregory Lungu	Provincial Health Office	Principal Nutritionist- Muchinga Province	lungugregory2@gmail.com
68	Zambia	Lillian Phiri Habeenzu	Provincial Health Office	Ag Principal Nutritionist-Luska Province	habeenzulillian@gmail.com
69	Zambia	Mr.Ricco Kapela	Provincial Health Office	Principal Nutritionist-Eeatern Pprovince	riccokapela@gmail.com
70	Zambia	Mr.Fred Chalula	Provincial Health Office	Principal Nutritionist -Luapula Province	fredchalula@gmail.com
71	Zambia	Misozi Namonje	Provincial Health Office	Principal Nutritionists - Northwestern Province	misozinamonje@gmail.com
72	Zambia	Joseph Mudenda	Provincial Health Office	Principal Nutritionists - Western Province	js264mudenda@gamil.com
73	Zambia	Chipo Siafwa	Provincial Health Office	Principal Nutritionists - Southern Province	chiposiafway1@yahoo.com
74	Zambia	Mr.Martin Liyungu	MOH HQ	NIS Consultant	martinliyungu08@gmail.com
75	Zambia	Ms.Dorothy Sikazwe	MOH HQ	Chief Nutrition Officer	dorothysikazwe@gmail.com
76	Zambia	Ms.Agnes Aongola	MOH HQ	Chief Nutrition Officer	aaongola@yahoo.com
77	Zambia	Simon Muyambo	Evidence for Health	Senior Advisor	simon.Muyambo@msi-inc.com
78	Zambia	Iva Stamenova	European Union	Program Manager on Agriculture, Rural Development	Iva.STAMENOVA@eeas.europa.eu
79	Zambia	Ruth Siyandi	UNICEF	Nutrition Specialist	rsiyandi@unicef.org
80	Zambia	Wendy Mizinga	UNICEF	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	wchisanga@unicef.org
81	Zambia	Martin Mzumara	WHO	National Professional Officer Scaling Up Nutrition	mkmzumara@gmail.com
82	Zambia	Chipo Mwela	WHO	National Professional Officer Nutrition	mwelac@who.int
83	Zambia	Kristina Seris	WHO	External Relations	Serisk@who.int
84	HQ/RO/ Global	Xavier Pavard	European Commission	Policy Officer	Xavier.PAVARD@ec.europa.eu
85	HQ/RO/ Global	Laura Barrington	GIZ	Coordinator - Capacity for Nutrition (C4N)	laura.barrington@giz.de
86	HQ/RO/ Global	Juliane Pfuhl	GIZ	Advisor - Capacity for Nutrition (C4N)	juliane.pfuhl@giz.de

No.	Country	Name	Organisation	Position	Email address
87	HQ/RO/ Global	John Ntambi	UNICEF WCARO	Nutrition Specialist	jntambi@unicef.org
88	HQ/RO/ Global	Louise Mwirigi	UNICEF HQ	Nutrition Specialist	lmwirigi@unicef.org
89	HQ/RO/ Global	Chika Hayashi	UNICEF DAPM	Senior Advisor Statistics and Monitoring	chayashi@unicef.org
90	HQ/RO/ Global	Bekele, Hana	WHO	Medical Officer	bekeleh@who.int
91	HQ/RO/ Global	Dominguez, Elisa	WHO	Technical Officer	domingueze@who.int
92	HQ/RO/ Global	Mara Nyawo	UNICEF ESARO	Nutrition Specialist	mnyawo@unicef.org
93	HQ/RO/ Global	Tanja Berretta	UNICEF	Independent Consultant	tanja.berretta@gmail.com
94	HQ/RO/ Global	Juliawati Untoro	WHO WPRO	Technical Lead, Nutrition	untoroj@who.int
95	HQ/RO/ Global	Moses Aswa	Global Voices	Interpreter	moses.aswa@gmail.com
96	HQ/RO/ Global	Allen Atanga	Global Voices	Interpreter	aatanga@gmail.com

Peanuts spread in the family of Minata for use in meals.

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