



Nutrition in Emergency Series

Emergency Nutrition Preparedness

Guidance note: Nutrition Coordination

WHAT?

A **Nutrition Coordination mechanism** is a group of organizations/stakeholders committed and willing to support nutrition by jointly coordinating their activities to achieve better nutrition results. These are some of the key criteria of Nutrition Coordination Mechanisms:

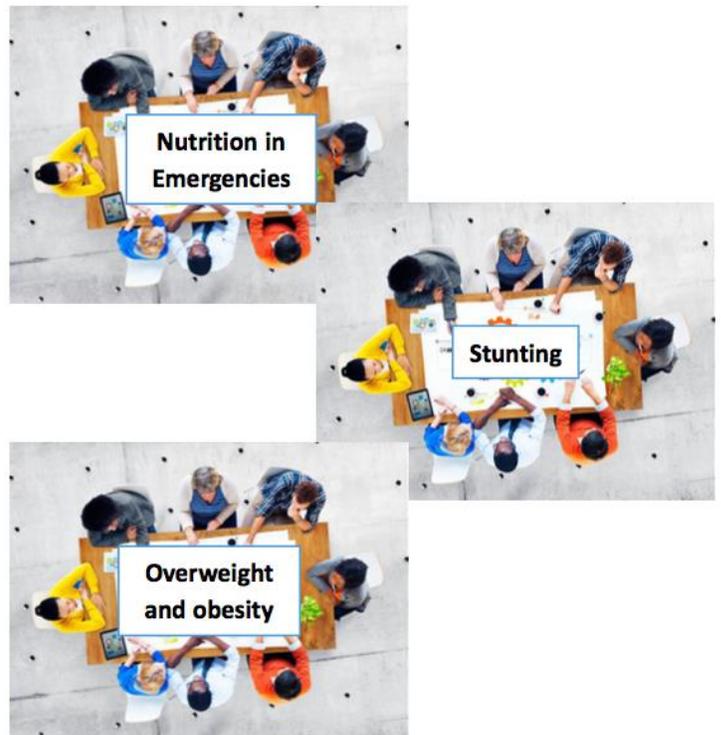
- **Objective: Prevent all forms of malnutrition, in emergency and non-emergency contexts.**
The objective of a Nutrition Coordination mechanism should be to identify nutrition issues (wasting, stunting, overweight and obesity, micronutrient deficiencies etc.) and develop plans to address these.
- **Leadership: Government, coordination authority around Nutrition**
It is recommended that National authorities, normally the Ministry of Health, set up and lead the coordination mechanism. It is important that they recognize the nutrition problems at the country level and develop ownership towards these.
- **Inclusive: Includes government entities, UN agencies, donors, NGOs, academia, civil society or other organizations working on nutrition**
Other organizations working nutrition in the country should be included as they can contribute to the efforts to address all forms of malnutrition. Having an inclusive nutrition coordination mechanism will allow to have a common front to tackle nutrition problems.
- **Nutrition-specific: Set up to discuss on nutrition issues and priorities of the country**
In contrast to multi-sectoral tables or groups, the Nutrition coordination mechanism is a sectoral table or group specific working to address nutrition issues (stunting, wasting, overweight, micronutrient deficiencies, maternal nutrition, emergency nutrition preparedness and response etc.). A food security or health coordination mechanisms that includes nutrition may not allow enough time to discuss on nutrition issues.
- **Functional: Regular meetings and follow-up on agreed resolutions**
it is important to find different ways of working together, define ways to communicate, and have a mechanism to follow-up actions. Having regular meetings to follow-up on decisions taken is important, in particular for long term issues, for which mechanisms need to meet up more frequently.

WHY?

Setting up a Nutrition Coordination Mechanism permits to:

- Have a **space for regular and effective discussions around nutrition** at country level
- Establish a system for **leadership and accountability of nutrition actions** at country level
- Provide a **framework for effective partnership** among governments, local authorities, local civil society agencies, NGOs, UN agencies and population
- **Have a common understanding of roles and responsibilities** of the various actors regarding nutrition and emergency and non-emergency situations
- **Avoid overlap** of nutrition activities at country level and **permits a more timely and effective action**
- Provide an indication of the **level of nutrition capacity in the country**
 - Capacity to identify and address nutrition gaps and vulnerabilities
 - Capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies

Figure: Working groups can be created to focus on specific nutrition topics (e.g. prevention of overweight in schools, emergency nutrition preparedness and response) and report back to the general Nutrition Coordination Mechanism.



HOW?

There are **no set rules to establish Nutrition Coordination Mechanisms**; this will depend on the nutrition actors present at country level and the nutrition issues to tackle. Nutrition Coordination Mechanisms can be simple working groups meeting at regular intervals to share information and progress, or official mechanisms with Terms of Reference (TORs) and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Here are a **five suggested actions** to start setting up the Nutrition Coordination Mechanism and tools that may be useful in starting coordination:

1. Establish, strengthen or reactivate a functioning country nutrition coordination mechanism led by national and/or provincial authorities, and include participation of governmental institutions, UN agencies, NGOs, and any other stakeholder working on nutrition

It is recommended that the **Government**, being the authority of Nutrition at the country level, set up and lead the national coordination mechanism and coordinate nutrition activities supported by nutrition stakeholders present at the country level, and lead the process to:

- Identify the **Nutrition coordination authority** at the government level (e.g. Ministry)
- Appoint the **person responsible for Nutrition**
- Convene a meeting with **all stakeholders working on nutrition** (governmental institutions, UN agencies, NGOs, Red Cross and others).
- Explain the objective to set up or strengthen a Nutrition Coordination Mechanisms:
 - have a common understanding, of **nutrition actors, actions taking place, and capacities available** at country level
 - identify **nutrition priorities** and better **coordinate the nutrition actions** to improve their timeliness and effectiveness
 - decide ways or channels to **communicate**
 - **share** any relevant nutrition news and documents: standards, guidelines and tools

2. Develop a contact list of nutrition partners and make an updated list easily available to nutrition partners and others (placement on UNICEF/partners websites, emailed quarterly, etc.).

Having a Contact list of nutrition partners will help give an overview of organizational presence in the country and allow individuals and groups to connect and coordinate. It is a simple but powerful coordination tool where there are a multitude of various actors. The tool is meant to be:

- a public, searchable database of basic contact information for individuals and organizations
- Easily available to nutrition partners (placement on partners websites, emailed quarterly, etc.)

An adaptable contact list template in MS Excel is available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/contact-list-template-nutrition-cluster/>

If there are a lot of active partners conducting several activities in different locations, **an advanced listing of who does what where and/or when (3W or 4W)** is useful to:

- Show operational presence of nutrition partners and location
- Enable organizations to help identify potential partners
- Quickly give a very rough understanding of ongoing activities
- Superficially identify potential overlaps or gaps in activities

The Listing of who does what where when (3W or 4W), an Adaptable 4W in Excel to be used in Nutrition Coordination Mechanisms is available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/4w-nutrition-cluster-2/>

3. Assess the capacities of different partners on the ground for covering current and potential future needs

A Capacity mapping tool, an MS Excel workbook for conducting capacity mapping of nutrition partners, is available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/capacity-mapping-tool-2/>

It permits to assess:

- Overall agency **domains of expertise** e.g. Management of malnutrition, IYCF
- **Current implementation capacity** per area of expertise and priority target groups
- Human resources
 - **Staff with capacity to facilitate training**
 - **Staff in need of training** (capacity development needs)
- **Available supplies:** ORS, Zinc, Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), weight scales, height boards, micronutrient powders, MUAC tapes.

4. Collaboratively develop Terms of reference (TORs) for documenting objectives, target population, expected outputs and outcomes, timeframe, the roles and responsibilities of the different nutrition partners, and the key functions.

Terms of Reference (TORs) are a document developed through consultation led by the government to define a joint **workplan** of the different stakeholders to better coordinate the nutrition actions to improve their timeliness and effectiveness. It:

- Outlines objectives, target population, expected outputs and outcomes, timeframe, the roles and responsibilities, communication lines of the different partners, and their key functions.
- Helps partner agree on how they are represented in decision-making, how they participate in assessments, share information and develop a nutrition strategy

GRIN-LAC has developed Generic Terms of Reference for Nutrition Coordination mechanisms, that contains suggestions and areas to consider when developing TORs for a Nutrition Coordination mechanism, whether national or sub-national.

5. Meet regularly and monitor and evaluate the workplan

Meeting regularly is important for having effective discussions, following-up of agreed actions and tracking progress towards targets in the TORs/workplan.

The plan for Monitoring and Evaluation should have a clear framework, agreed among the key stakeholders, after finalizing the workplan. It should clarify:

- What is to be monitored and evaluated
- The activities needed to monitor and evaluate
- Who is responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities
- When monitoring and evaluation activities are planned (timing)
- How monitoring and evaluation are carried out (methods)
- What resources are required and where they are committed

An adaptable Monitoring and Evaluation framework in Excel is available here:

<http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/m-and-e-framework-2/>

Other existing coordination tools

- **Financial tracking tool:** An adaptable MS Excel template to help track funding requirements, funding received / committed from different sources and funding gaps.
Available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/financial-tracking-tool-2/>
- **Meeting agenda template:** Meeting agenda template to be shared with partners prior every meeting. It is important to share with partners agenda of each meeting in advance, so that they can prepare to the meeting and know what will be discussed. it is necessary also to add a summary of action points from the last meeting to update all partners on progress made. There is also additional information that might be included in the meeting agenda email/template presented in the current template.
Available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/meeting-agenda-template-nutrition-cluster/>
- **Meeting minutes template:** Adaptable meeting minutes template to record summary of discussions and main action points at the meetings. Can be used for any type of meetings (cluster meetings, working group meetings, bilateral meetings, etc.)
Available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/meeting-minutes-template-nutrition-cluster/>
- **Code violations tracking tool:** Tool to track breaches to the Code (distribution of breast milk substitutes in emergency situations). It is an internal document for the Nutrition Coordination Mechanism to compile code violations for further consolidation, analysis and follow up. It should not be shared widely as it contains sensitive information, such as who reported the Code violation.
Available here: <http://nutritioncluster.net/resources/bms-code-violations-tracking-tool-nutrition-cluster/>

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- There should be a **common understanding** of the **nutrition actors** present at the country level (NGOs, UN agencies, civil society etc.), their specific **nutrition capacities**, and the **activities** they conduct at the national level to be able to better coordinate these and improve their timeliness and effectiveness.
- Having a Nutrition Coordination Mechanism **set up *before* emergencies** hit is a prerequisite for a successful emergency nutrition response to emergencies. It is very difficult to start a coordination mechanism in emergencies if there is no previous capacity and experience in coordination.
- **Working groups** can be created to focus on specific nutrition topics (e.g. prevention of overweight in schools, emergency nutrition preparedness and response) and report back to the general Nutrition Coordination Mechanism. The creation of small groups will depend on whether these are needed or not.
- Having **TORs** for the group increases its level of importance in the political agenda, it makes sure it is recognized and formalized. However, caution needs to be taken as sometimes TORs can be inflexible, and can be a barrier or challenge rather than a facilitator to coordination. The lack of TORs should not impede nutrition stakeholders to meet up, discuss and find ways to work together. In other words, it is recommended to **develop TORs** but this **should not slow process down**.

- **Nutrition in Emergency** issues should be discussed and planned for to ensure that there is knowledge and a structure in place so that it can **become emergency nutrition coordination mechanism in the event of an emergency**.
- The Nutrition Coordination Mechanism should create an **open space for policy development** with different nutrition stakeholders at the country level.
- The problem of nutrition is not a problem of an individual government. To **ensure continuity across different governments**, it is important to include civil society organizations, representatives of communities, NGOs, UN agencies etc. It should be set up in such a way that if there are changes in the government, stakeholders will continue to meet regularly. For example, in Guatemala, when there is a change in government, the Nutrition Coordination Mechanism sends a letter to the new government authorities giving the background of the nutrition coordination mechanism, the objectives pursued and the activities conducting, while inviting them to be part of it and lead it.
- The **Private sector** is an important partner in Nutrition given that companies are the ones that develop products such as micronutrients, ready-to-use therapeutic food, iron fortified flour, iodization of salt etc. However, an important aspect to consider is the **conflict of interest**. Governments need to ensure the right of children to adequate public health, thus the private sector should not be included in public health policy development. Nutrition policies should be developed by governments who have at heart the wellbeing of people and therefore their priority should be to ensure public health, and not income generation by the private sector. WHO has developed guidelines in this regard and countries should be able to use these tools:
 - WHO. 2016. Addressing and managing conflicts of interest in the planning and delivery of nutrition programmes at country level:
http://www.who.int/nutrition/events/2015_conflictsofinterest_nut_programmes/en/
 - WHO. 2017. Safeguarding against possible conflicts of interest in nutrition programmes
 - o <http://www.who.int/nutrition/consultation-doi/comments/en/>

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