

Government of Nepal
National Planning Commission

Nutrition and Food Security Secretariat

Concept Note

July 2012

ABBREVIATIONS

DHS	Demographic Health Survey
DPMAS	District Poverty Monitoring Analysis System
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FNSP	Food and Nutrition Security Plan
GoN	Government of Nepal
HLNFSSC	High Level Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committee
HMIS	Health Management Information System
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSNP	Multi-sectoral Nutrition Plan
NAGA	Nutrition Assessment and Gap Analysis
NLSS	Nepal Living Standards Survey
NFSS	Nutrition and Food Security Secretariat
NNFSCC	National Nutrition and Food Security Coordination Committee
NPC	National Planning Commission
PMAS	Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System
SUN	Scaling-Up Nutrition
TYP	Three-Year Plan
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY SECRETARIAT

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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The nutrition and food security situation in Nepal is far from satisfactory. According to the World Bank an estimated 2-3 % of the country's GDP (US\$ 250 to 375 million) is lost every year on account of vitamin and mineral deficiencies alone. As per the latest Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2011), chronic energy deficiency in women (as measured in body mass index – BMI) remains at 18.2 percent and the prevalence of low birth weight is estimated at 12.4 per cent. Two out of every five (41 per cent) children under five are stunted or chronically malnourished and a third (29 per cent) is underweight. Wasting, which reflects more short-term under-nutrition or increase in infections, currently stands at 11 percent.

With a global hunger index of 19.9, which is considered a serious level,¹ addressing food security remains a high priority for Nepal. Even with about two-third of the population being engaged in agriculture, domestic production is barely adequate to meet the increasing needs of the population. Thus, Nepal has turned into a net food importer in recent years. Furthermore, many households are facing significant problems in accessing food due to poverty and physical remoteness.

There are multiple determinants of malnutrition and food insecurity, consequently, actions to address these must be the responsibility of a number of different sectors such as health, education, agriculture, livestock, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and local development. The Nutrition Assessment and Gap Analysis (NAGA) carried out in 2009 outlined the multi-sectoral determinants of malnutrition in Nepal, and called for a multi-sectoral approach to tackling this problem.

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has taken some concrete steps recently to attach high priority towards achieving improved nutrition and food security of its population. Recognizing the need for strengthened multi-sectoral policy guidance and coordination, a high level National Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committee has been established recently. The steering committee is the highest level body formed to ensure commitment from the government for addressing nutrition and food security in Nepal. Chaired by the Vice-Chairperson of National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Secretary of NPC Secretariat serving as the Member Secretary, it has representation from various ministries related to nutrition and food security at the secretary level in addition to selected experts on nutrition and food security.

¹ Some sub-regions such as the Karnali face a hunger index at extremely alarming level of about 40, and about one third of the population are without minimum caloric intake required for a healthy living.

The steering committee has responsibility to provide policy level guidance to programmes on nutrition and food security, raise awareness on significance of nutrition and food security for national social and economic growth through continuous advocacy, ensure adequate allocation of resources to implement nutrition and food security programs across the key sectors, and also monitor the progress achieved against targets. In order to take on these responsibilities, the committee needs to be supported by dedicated professional staff who can work for and on behalf of the committee as needed. This concept note paper outlines the plan for setting up such a secretariat in support of the Steering Committee, which will enable the Government of Nepal (GoN) to achieve the expected goals and generate the intended outputs.

CURRENT POLICY INITIATIVES

The GoN has expressed strong commitment to address the complex set of determining factors for improving nutrition and food security through a multi-sectoral approach. The current Three-year Plans (TYPs) aim at reducing the rates of infant, child, and maternal mortality through proven and cost-effective interventions. Key nutrition actions have also been reflected in the plan. Strategies and plans of health and agriculture sectors give emphasis on nutrition and food security.

The process in 2011 to develop Multi-sectoral Nutrition Plan (MSNP) of Nepal has facilitated consensus on activities to take place in the next five years to reduce maternal and child chronic malnutrition in Nepal. The MSNP has been approved by the Cabinet in 2012, and efforts are currently ongoing to model implementation of MSNP in selected districts. This effort is aligned with the global Scaling Up Nutrition movement (SUN) and framework which strongly advocates for the adoption of a multi-sectoral approach, arguing that the two essentially complementary approaches, i.e. “nutrition specific” through the health sector and “nutrition sensitive” through non-health sectors, both need scaling up. Nepal is actively engaged with the global SUN movement under the Prime Minister’s leadership.

Similarly, a food and nutrition security plan (FSNP) is being prepared as part of the Agriculture Development Strategy, which is also at an advanced stage. The National Planning Commission is expected to provide guidance and coordination for the same, in order to have a workable multi-sectoral plan that is implemented with various related sectoral ministries. Efforts are needed to ensure that the multi-sectoral nutrition plan and food and nutrition security plan (FNSP) are aligned with each other as well as to translate them towards an effective implementation at sub-regional level.

Nepal’s recent initiatives on multi-sectoral nutrition action plan as well as food security plan of action have developed against the backdrop of 40 years of such planning exercises in Nepal which have so far not yielded satisfactory results. It will thus be critical to learn from past experience in order to achieve meaningful results in the future. A key prerequisite for achieving significant improvements in nutrition and food security is to have a sustained high level leadership through the National Planning Commission to strength inter-ministerial accountability that will motivate various Ministries to achieve the results for which they are responsible in the agreed framework. The National Planning Commission in Nepal, working closely with the Ministry of Finance, is well placed to create that intra-ministerial accountability to implement the multi-sectoral plan for nutrition and food security effectively.

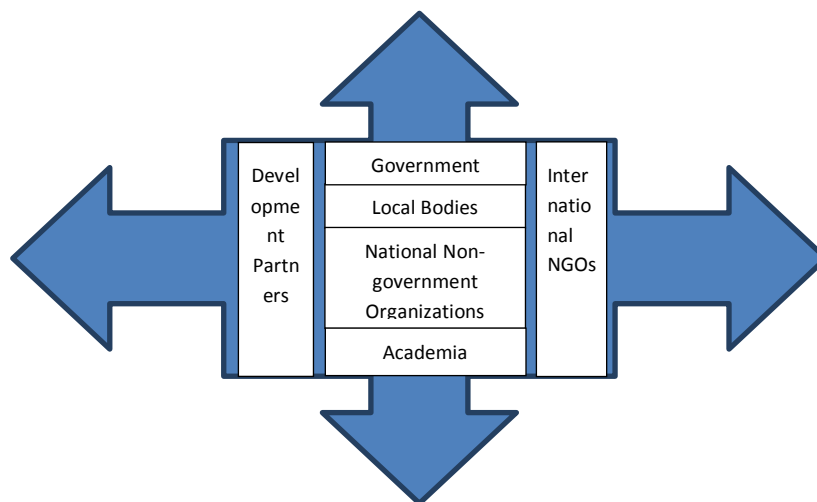
Another success factor in such initiatives is the technical capacity of a central institution to track progress in the implementation of action plans. At the moment the capacity within the National Planning Commission to track progress against the multi-sectoral plan is insufficient and thus additional support from the development partners is expected to enhance the capacity. It is worth noting that various development partners have provided support in this regard to the government. WFP, for instance, has been working at developing capacity and institutionalizing the NeKSAP (Nepal Food Security Monitoring System) within the government structure, and has launched in 2012 the second phase of the project for a duration of four years. UNICEF has just completed a comprehensive review of Nutrition Information Systems (NIS) across the five sectors that are part of the multi-sectoral nutrition plan. This will inform development of a strategic plan to strengthen the existing nutrition information with links to other early warning systems such as NeKSAP and FAO supported recent initiative on Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

The nutrition and food security architecture involves many players which demands effective coordination to consolidate nutrition plan and programmes and to cumulate effects and outcomes from all the sectors to attain the national goals and objectives of the MSNP and FNSP. Furthermore, M&E mechanisms need to be in place to monitor implementation progress and to evaluate impact of the national plans involving all the key sectors, nutrition capacity at the key levels require strengthening, and continuous advocacy and communication assured to maintain the strong government commitment. Unless these critical factors are addressed, Nepal is not very likely to significantly reduce chronic under-nutrition in a sustained manner, to a level that it no longer poses a threat to the national human resource capital.

RATIONALE

At this point of time the issue of Nutrition and Food Security has gathered enormous political attention and interest in Nepal. Partly this momentum can be attributed to the SUN movement and partly to the increasing awareness on the part of government and other stakeholders to the critical importance of nutrition and food security for achievement of all the MDGs as well as for social and economic development. Nepal has been recognized for its success story in scaling up micronutrient interventions. This has helped augment political commitment. However, institutional arrangements are important to mobilize additional resources from national government, development partners, local governments and community sectors for the accelerated improvement of nutrition and food security.

At the moment the NPC requires enhanced capacity to formulate policies on food security and nutrition and to track progress against the multi-sectoral planning framework through a permanent and dedicated Secretariat. The concept note proposes innovative arrangements and approaches that bring individual contributions through both vertical and horizontal coordination of multiple stakeholders to advance nutrition and food security that can provide greater accountability with enhanced linkages to national- and local level processes.



2. PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

It is proposed to establish a **National Nutrition and Food Security Secretariat under the High Level Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committee (HLNFSSC)**. The Secretariat will avail operational capacity to the HLNFS SC, and will be instrumental in ensuring linkages between the institutional structure, development partners and the consultative/technical structures. The Secretariat will work under the general guidance of the Nutrition and Food Security Coordination Committee (NFSCC).

The Secretariat will be hosted at NPC and it will be comprised of dedicated professional staff working for, and on behalf of, the HLNFS SC on cross-cutting nutrition and food security issues (details on the composition and functions of the secretariat staff is shown the following sections of this concept note). The GoN, the UN REACH Initiative,² the World Food Programme, the World Bank, and UNICEF will cover the costs for this expert staff for an initial period of one year, with possible extension.

The World Bank, UNICEF, World Food Program and UN REACH will also contribute to non-staff costs, while the NPC will make available office space, basic furnishing and ICT support to the Secretariat.

² UN REACH, which stands for “Renewed Efforts to End Child Hunger and Undernutrition”, is an initiative under four UN agencies (FAO, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO) committed to a renewed effort against child hunger and undernutrition in the most heavily burdened countries. REACH facilitates the complex process of coordinating different agencies, and government departments as they strengthen capacity and turn national policies on child undernutrition and food security into action plans.

The performance of the Secretariat will be jointly reviewed by a committee comprised of representatives of the NPC and of the development partners supporting the Secretariat.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The overall objective of the **National Nutrition and Food Security Secretariat** will be to provide strong support to the HLNFSSC and the NFSCC in coordinating and assisting policy making, with emphasis on a multi-sectoral approach, thereby contributing to improving the food security and nutritional status of the population of Nepal.

The specific objectives of the Secretariat are the following:

- To enable the NPC and key Ministries to advocate for and communicate about improved nutrition and food security and the prevailing situation in Nepal by leading a strategic advocacy and communication campaign,
- To provide expert support to the NPC for preparing periodic plans, and Annual Plan (budget) based on the evidence-based information reported by Key Ministries and networks,
- To guide and draft national policy documents related to nutrition and food security,
- To facilitate coordination between the NPC and external development partners who support nutrition and food security in Nepal,
- To support the NPC in its efforts to encourage short, medium and long term measures to improve capacity within Nepal to take actions that will improve food security and reduce malnutrition,
- To enable the NPC to effectively track progress of the multi-sectoral nutrition plan and progress on food security and thus create accountability within the key Ministries for achieving nutrition and food security results,
- To coordinate and facilitate bridging the information gap on nutrition and food security between the Steering Committee and key Ministries so as to update the policy level authorities with situation and issues on the ground.

The outcomes to be delivered by the Secretariat during the first year are the following:

- Advocacy and communications campaign defined and launched to raise the profile and obtain further commitment for nutrition and food security among the key Ministries and to ensure that nutritional content of sectoral development plans is well articulated (Measurement: Review of campaign plan and activities implemented)
- Inter-sectoral coordination improved for accelerated reduction of chronic maternal and child under nutrition and enhanced food security (Measurement: Review of minutes of coordination meetings held and decisions taken)
- Capacity of NPC and the key sectors at all the key levels to formulate policies and implement MSNP and FNSP improved (Measurement: Review of proportion of line Ministry budgets assigned to nutrition-related activities; Review of scale of programs implemented by line Ministries to operationalize the MSNP and the FNSP)
- Multi-sectoral nutrition and food security information systems strengthened using existing platforms (Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System –PMAS- and District Poverty Monitoring and

Analysis System -DPMAS) to effectively monitor progress on implementation of MSNP and FNSP improved, with links to NeKSAP and IPC. (Measurement: review of M and E framework developed to integrate relevant existing systems

- Annual report on the status of nutrition and food security programs in Nepal produced, discussed in NPC meeting(s) with the line Ministries and disseminated through the media (Measurement: Review of report and its dissemination)

The Secretariat will develop a work plan detailing activities and timelines to achieve the above objectives and outcomes.

ORGANISATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

It is proposed that the Secretariat will work under the overall guidance and support of two key divisions of the NPC – Social Development and Agriculture and Rural Development. On a day to day basis the secretariat will work closely with the Programme Directors of Health and Nutrition and Agriculture and Rural Development Sections of the NPC. It will also establish close relationship with key ministries and development partners.

It is proposed that the Secretariat, under the Member Secretary of the HLNFSFC, will comprise eight staff including a Lead Facilitator, Facilitator, Food security officer, Nutrition officer, Results monitoring officer, Communications officer, Programme Assistant, and Administrative/finance assistant.

A summary of the functions of the Secretariat staff can be consulted in Annex 1 to this document.

The organigram of the proposed structure is shown in Annex 2 to this document.

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT STAFF**Lead Facilitator:**

- Provide overall strategic guidance on nutrition and food security policy planning, coordination, and advocacy,
- Provide feedback and suggestions for strategic policy directives for Food Security and Nutrition Plan of Action and the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan implementation,
- Ensure overall management of the Secretariat, including its staff (Nutrition Officer, Food Security Officer, Results Monitoring Officer, Communications Officer, and Programme Assistant)
- Liaise with all the key external development partners represented in the Nepal Nutrition Group (NNG), and Food Security Working Group (FSWG) to facilitate coordination Support and follow-up implementation of decisions of Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committee,
- Support to the multi-sectoral nutrition and food security coordination committee and provide support to the Steering Committees,
- Facilitate HLNFSMC meetings to ensure effective multi-sectoral coordination and harmonization,
- Assess nutrition and food security capacity of sector ministries and local bodies and assist to prepare HRD plan,
- Support the creation of a joint- advocacy strategy for nutrition and food security,
- Support establishment or strengthening of the multi-sectoral nutrition and food security information systems,
- Support development of the monitoring and evaluation framework, as part of the multi-sectoral nutrition and food security plans of action with links to district multi-sectoral implementation and management system,
- Support appraisal of progress on Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) in Nepal, including implementation of MSNP and FNSP, based on the review of existing data, outcome of joint field missions, and consultative meetings with all the key partners
- Act as International Facilitator for the UN REACH initiative,
- Funding for the position: UN REACH initiative.

Facilitator:

- Provide support to the Lead Facilitator on all aspects of the latter's tasks, with particular focus on REACH activities.
- Provide facilitating support to the national SUN focal point, to prepare consolidated progress reports through consultative process involving key sectors and partners
- Actively liaise with the key Ministries and local bodies to assure their active engagement and contribution to the effective implementation of MSNP and FNSP
- Support development of policy briefs and advocacy materials on MSNP and FNSP, and their alignment with global SUN/REACH initiatives, for use in orientation and sensitization meetings at all the key levels - national and local
- Support capacity development on MSNP and FNSP implementation and monitoring at all the key the sub-national levels
- Funding for the position: UN REACH initiative.

Nutrition Officer:

- Assist the NPC in strengthening nutrition capacity, contribute support to preparing policy documents and briefs related to nutrition
- Contribute support to the development of updated national nutrition strategy and plan in line with the MSNP in close collaboration with the MoHP and on behalf of the NPC and in liaising with other key Ministries in the implementation of the same
- Prepare nutrition related materials in support of the National Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committee
- Contribute to national nutrition surveillance mechanism based on the outcome of the MNIS review and the recommendations on the way ahead. Support establishing the linkages with the Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP), the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC), and other related activities.
- Support NPC in coordination of different nutrition initiatives in Nepal
- Funding for the position: World Bank

Food Security Officer:

- Assist the NPC in strengthening food security capacity and contribute support in preparing policy documents and briefs related to food security
- Contribute to food security aspect of the food security and nutrition plan on behalf of NPC and in liaising with key Ministries in the implementation of the same
- Prepare food security related materials in support of the National Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committee
- Assist NPC in linking up with the Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP) and providing policy guidance for the same.
- Support NPC in coordination of different food security initiatives in Nepal
- Funding for the position: World Food Programme

Results Monitoring Officer:

- Liaise with the key Ministries related to the multi-sectoral nutrition plan to ensure they have sufficiently robust monitoring and evaluation systems to obtain data to track the implementation of the plan
- Support strengthening of the MNIS system based on the outcome of the MNIS review and recommendations on the way forward
- Liaise with the Key Ministries related to the food and nutrition security plan of action to ensure that the M&E framework and plan is aligned with the MSNP
- Create and manage a database to track progress on the implementation of the multi-sectoral nutrition planning framework
- Advise Ministries and external development partners on gaps in available data and on useful evaluations
- Provide data on nutrition and food security for the preparation of various communications products, including the annual results report
- Funding for the position: World Bank

Communications Officer:

- Lead the preparation of the communications component of the annual work plan of the Secretariat and its implementation
- Work with Ministries and external development partners to develop and implement a strategic communications campaign related to the multi-sectoral planning framework (for food security and nutrition)
- Assist the National Planning Commission and other Ministries as required in engaging with the media on food and nutrition security issues
- Funding for the position: World Bank

Administration /Finance Assistant

- Carry out administrative functions of the Secretariat
- Manage budget and accounts for the Secretariat
- Publish annual financial accounts and budget report for the Secretariat
- Funding for the position: GoN

Programme Assistant:

- Provide support to the Lead Facilitator
- Assist in planning meetings, documentation, minutes and reports for the Secretariat
- Publish the annual report of the Secretariat
- Funding for the position: UNICEF

ANNEX 2: ORGANIGRAM OF THE PROPOSED SECRETARIAT

