Situational Analysis of the Landscape of Nutrition Data Financing in Ethiopia

August 2022

Assessment Overview and Approach

To improve nutrition status in Ethiopia, the Government of Ethiopia has implemented various multisectoral policies and governance mechanisms with development partner support
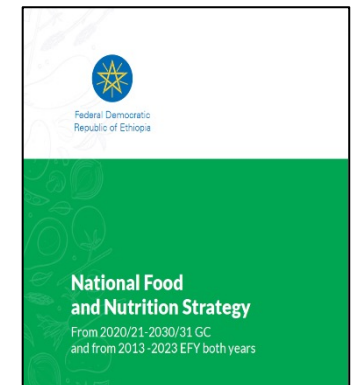
Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP)

- Adopted in 2018 to promote a coordinated and comprehensive approach to food and nutrition security

- Provides a foundation for multi-sectoral collaboration, community-oriented nutrition service provision, & high impact nutrition interventions

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Food and Nutrition Policy

November 2018
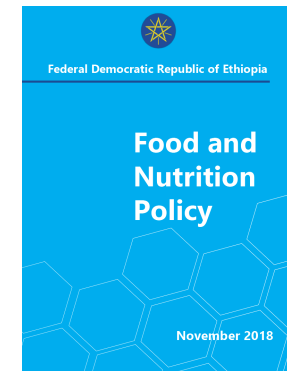
Food and Nutrition Strategy (FNS)

- Adopted in 2021 to serve as a guide to implement the strategic direction laid out in the FNP

- Includes 13 strategic objectives which align with the seven intervention areas described in the FNP

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

National Food and Nutrition Strategy
From 2020/21-2030/31 GC
and from 2013-2023 EFY both years

Ethiopia lacks certain data that are critical to support policy implementation and drive equitable progress in reducing malnutrition

Nutrition Data Mapping Assessment released in 2021 by the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) identified **62 data source**s with **data available to track progress for five of the six World Health Assembly Nutrition targets** (low birth weight being the exception), however the report also found several limitations in available nutrition data -

As of 2019, **only two implementing ministries** of the National Nutrition Program (NNP II), Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, had information systems that collect, analyze and use routine monitoring data[1]

➢ A **limited number of nutrition indicators** were included in these systems

The Unified Nutrition Information System in Ethiopia **(UNISE) was not yet implemented at national scale**

Limited data were available to assess the coverage of nutrition-sensitive interventions, beyond WASH

Strategic Objective 12 of the FNS aims to increase and improve nutrition data to enhance evidence informed decision-making

Strategy 12: Enhance evidence-informed decision-making, learning and accountability	
Strategic Initiative 12.1: Ensure evidence-based implementation of the FNP and strategy	
12.1.1	Ensure continuous generation and access of quality food and nutrition data and its use for decision making
12.1.2	Ensure generation and dissemination of food and nutrition research findings to enhance evidence-based decision making
12.1.3	Ensure the development of multisectoral monitoring and evaluation system for FNP/FNS implementation
Strategic Initiative 12.2: Ensure food and nutrition evidence translation and learning	
12.2.1	Ensure a mechanism for food and nutrition evidence translation to improve program implementation
12.2.2	Ensure that evidence-based learning is in place

The Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) and its National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) project play critical roles in FNS implementation

EPHI is a national public health institute primarily mandated to conduct research including to -

1. Improve digital health data repository and information system
2. Boost research, evidence synthesis, technology transfer, and use

NIPN *was initiated in 2018 as part of EPHI's FNRD to* **promote evidence-based decision making** *for nutrition and* **support the implementation of the FNP**

Role within FNS

➢ Houses the Food and Nutrition Research Directorate (FNRD) which leads implementation of Strategy 12
➢ Hosts the national data management center (NDMC), a source of 200+ public health related datasets

➢ Delivers evidence-based analyses to inform and support national policymakers, including on Strategy 12
➢ Provides financial & technical assistance to the national food and nutrition survey and capacity strengthening for data activities
➢ Developed the nutrition-related data repository

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Additionally, the National Food and Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER-SC) provides technical support to enhance accountability across sectors for the successful FNS implementation

NFNTC was established to lead overall implementation of the FNS and includes three steering committees[1] -

National Food & Nutrition Technical Committee (NFNTC)

National food & Nutrition Programme management steering committee

National food fortification steering Committee

National Food and Nutrition monitoring evaluation and research steering committee
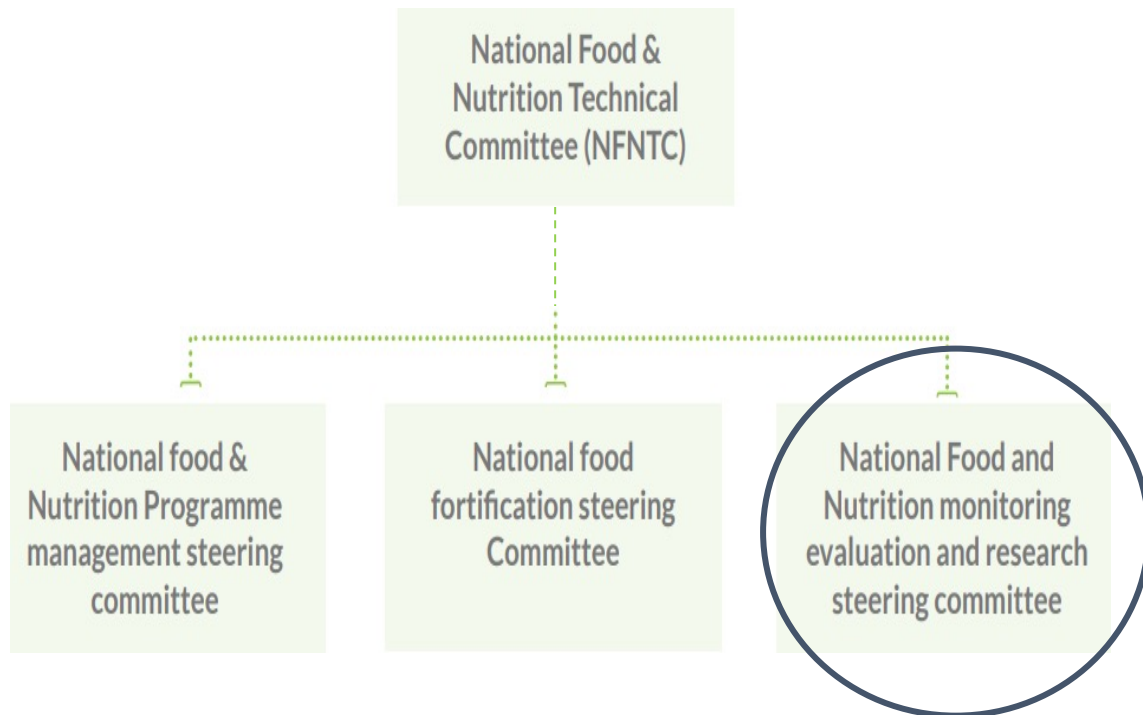
MER-SC

- Organized by EPHI (chair) & the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) (co-chair); Some financial and technical support provided by NIPN

- Committee supports monitoring, evaluation, & research activities for the effective FNS implementation

- Ministry of Health collects performance scorecards from various sectors engaged under the FNS and reports to the MER-SC

1. Source: Terms of Reference for the MER-SC of the Food and Nutrition Strategy

Strategy 12 has been costed but sources of financing for strategy implementation have not been identified

Costing is an important first step, however it is **not sufficiently specific** and does **not guarantee that funds will be mobilized** to support implementation

Information on the financing landscape for nutrition data can **facilitate advocacy and resource mobilization efforts** for nutrition data

There is **limited published literature** around nutrition data financing both in Ethiopia and globally

Rationale of Data Financing Assessment

Primary: Provide information on the financing landscape for nutrition data **to support EPHI in the planning and implementation of Strategy 12 of the FNS**

Secondary: Useful for **identifying future potential funding sources** for nutrition data

The assessment aims to answer three questions to help fill the knowledge gap around financing nutrition data in Ethiopia
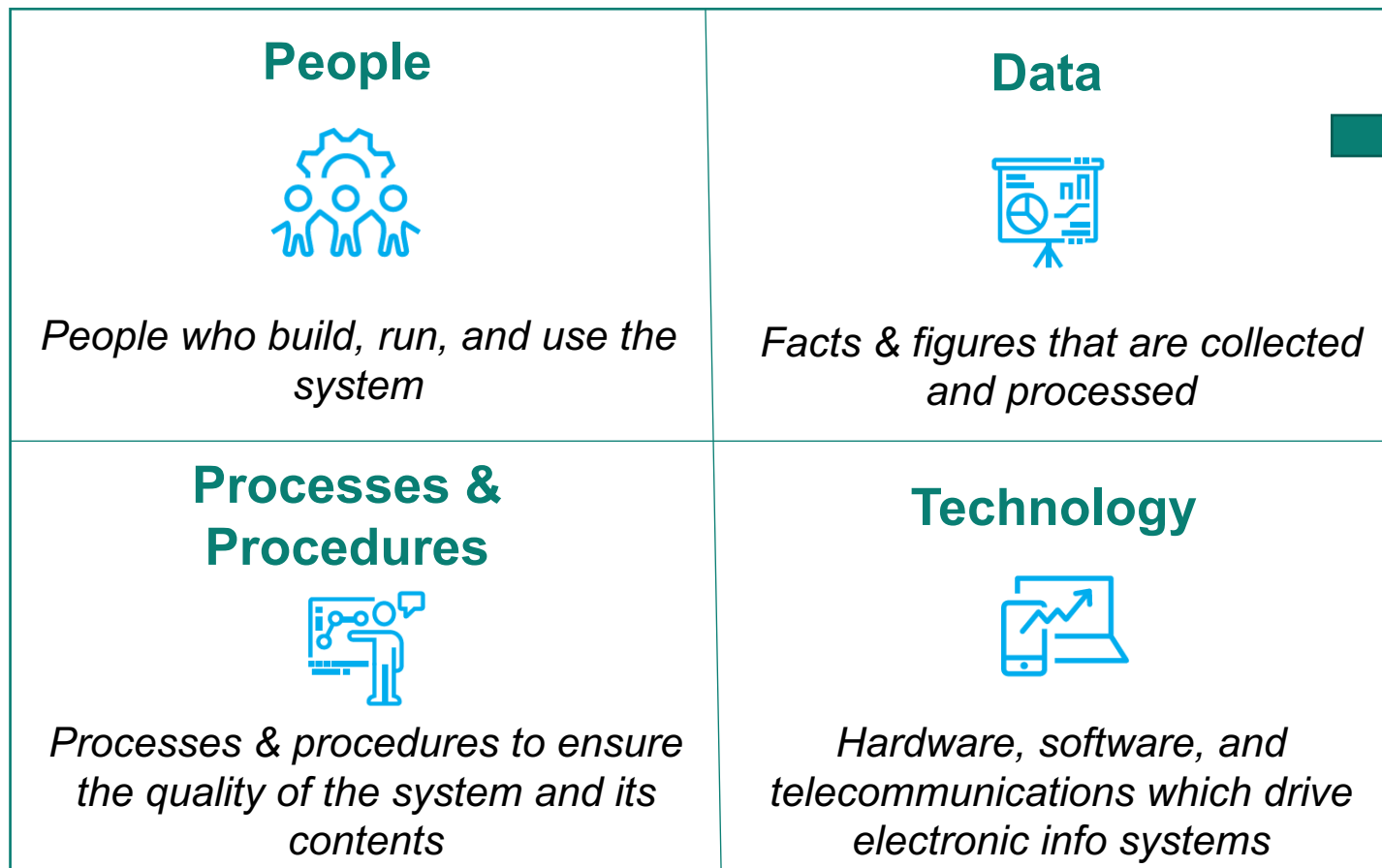
1 Does Strategy 12 of the FNS outline activities that **reflect common understanding of nutrition information systems**?

2 What is the funding status of Strategy 12?
- What is **currently being funded** and where does that funding come from?
- What is **not being funded**?
- What **additional funding sources** could be considered both for activities already being funded and those not being funded?

3 What are the **budgetary processes and financing architecture** for nutrition data?

We define a nutrition information system as an integrated set of principles, practices and processes which guides the prioritization, collection, analysis and dissemination of nutrition-related data[1]

Components of a Nutrition Information System

People

People who build, run, and use the system

Data

Facts & figures that are collected and processed

Processes & Procedures

Processes & procedures to ensure the quality of the system and its contents

Technology

Hardware, software, and telecommunications which drive electronic info systems

*This assessment focuses **mainly on the data component**; therefore, the other components may not be fully captured

1 Definition and components sourced from the UNICEF national NIS guidance

Our scope focuses on large-scale government/ donor coordinated systems that influence policies and programs rather than partner or program specific information systems

We included the following types of nutrition data[1] –

| Capacity strengthening on data collection, analysis, & use				
Household Survey Data	**Routine Administrative Data**	**Surveillance Data**	**Financial Data**	**Excluded Within Scope**
Population-based surveys within health, agriculture, and other nutrition-sensitive sectors (i.e., Demographic and Health Survey)	Development, implementation, and data quality assurance of routine information systems for nutrition	Timely systems which monitor and collect information relevant to the nutrition sector	Tracking of nutrition budget and expenditure data	-Small-scale special studies/ research -M&E activities of specific nutrition programs -Data activities in peripheral sectors (e.g., agriculture)

1. Categories adopted from a previously published DataDENT framework; These are cross-cutting across strategic objectives within Strategy 12

We collected primary data through semi-structured interviews with donors, government ministries, and implementing partners in the nutrition data space
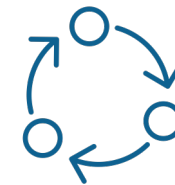
Interviews covered two major topics

Funding for FNS Strategy 12
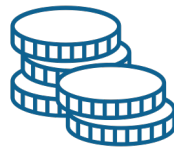
✓ Are individuals aware of Strategy 12?
✓ Are they funding or implementing activities included in the strategy? What types of activities?
✓ What other nutrition data activities are being funded (not encompassed in the FNS)?

Budgetary Processes

✓ How does the budgetary process for nutrition data work?
✓ How are nutrition data activities prioritized?
✓ What are the challenges?
✓ Any recommendations to improve the process?

All information collected is within the timeframe of EFY 2012-2016 (July 2019-June 2024)

We spoke with 20 individuals total who work for the following 14 organizations

Government Ministries

Seqota Declaration Program Delivery Unit

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Donors

Implementing Partners

Note: Scaling Up Nutrition reported they do not support activities related to nutrition data

Key Findings

Three key findings emerged from our research

Most respondents are involved with activities aligned with Strategy 12 of the FNS, however, donors and governments are not intentionally funding activities specific to the strategy's implementation plan

Respondents are aware of the nutrition data activities their organization finances or implements, however they were unable to share data on amounts and sufficiency of financing

Nutrition data activities are included in the overall federal planning and budgeting process for nutrition, however, there is a lack of consistency and coordination across sectors in whether and how specific activities are included

A. Nutrition data activities are most frequently prioritized for budgeting based on the mandate of the ministry, donor preferences, and program needs

B. Many respondents noted a problem of limited multisectoral coordination for nutrition as a reflection of broader budgeting challenges for nutrition
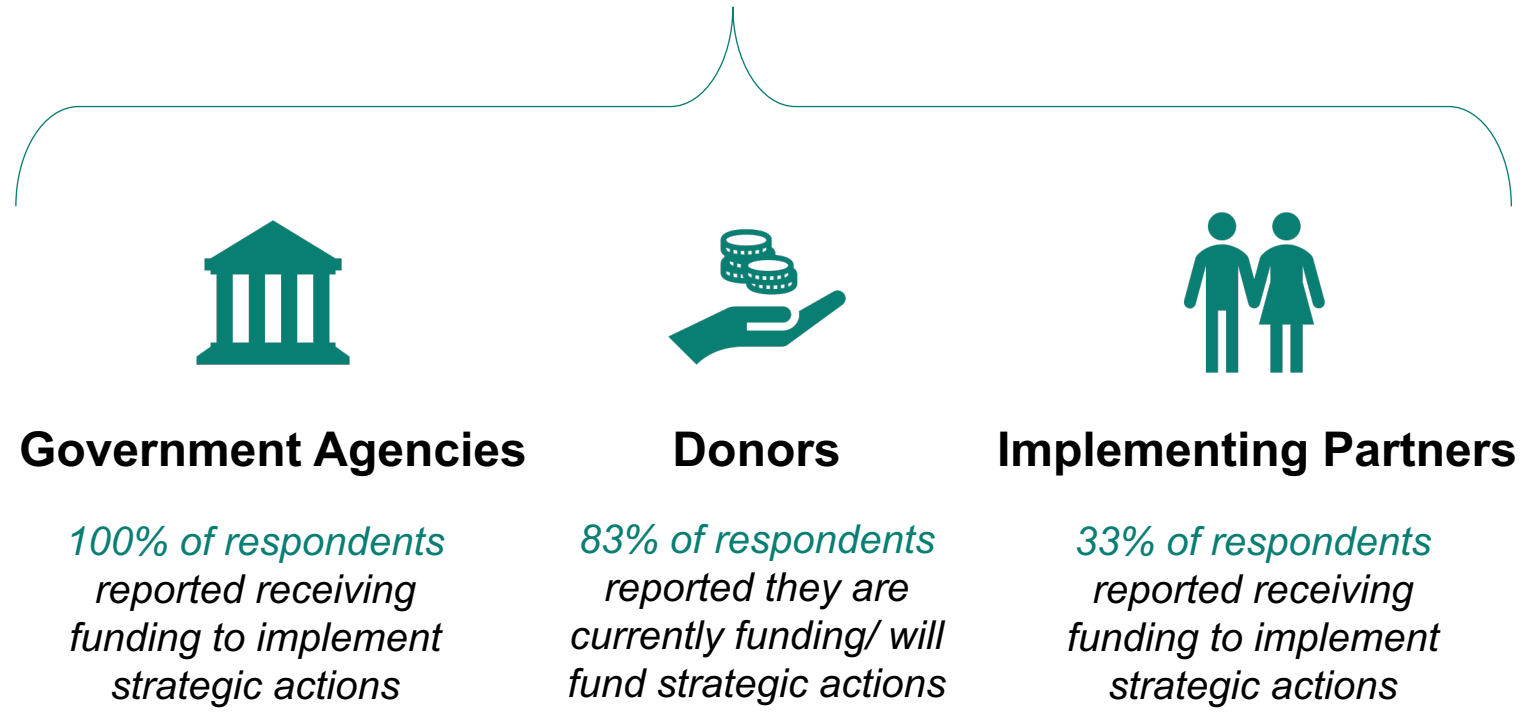
Key finding #1

Most respondents are involved with activities aligned with Strategy 12 of the FNS, however, donors and governments are not intentionally funding activities specific to the strategy's implementation plan

19 out of 20 respondents reported having knowledge of Strategy 12 of the FNS

Strategic Objective 12: Enhance evidence informed decision-making, learning and accountability

Out of the 19 respondents who had knowledge of the strategy

Government Agencies

100% of respondents reported receiving funding to implement strategic actions

Donors

83% of respondents reported they are currently funding/ will fund strategic actions

Implementing Partners

33% of respondents reported receiving funding to implement strategic actions

"When budget is allotted for other parts of the FNS, Strategy 12 should also be considered as an important component because we can not be sure if other components of the strategy are achieving their objectives if proper data is not collected" – Government Organization

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Respondents finance and implement activities aligned with three out of the five sub-initiatives within Strategy 12; however, the sub-initiatives are broad, and partners are not intentionally funding activities in the annual implementation plan

| Sub Initiatives Within Strategy 12	Supported by respondents?	Example Activities
Strategic initiative 12.1.1 Ensure continuous generation and access of quality food and nutrition data and its use for decision making	✅	Pilot program for the Unified Information System for Nutrition (UNISE) implementation in two regions; capacity building on nutrition data analysis and utilization
Strategic initiative 12.1.2 Ensure generation and dissemination of food and nutrition research finding to enhance evidence-based decision making	✅	NIPN produced evidence-based analysis and convened stakeholders to support national policy makers and promote informed decision making
Strategic initiative 12.1.3 Ensure the development of multisectoral monitoring and evaluation system for FNP/Strategy implementation	✅	Resource tracking assessment for the Food and Nutrition Strategy
Strategic initiative 12.2.1 Ensure a mechanism for food and nutrition evidence translation to improve program implementation	❌	N/A
Strategic initiative 12.2.2 Ensure that evidence-based learning is in place	❌	N/A

Key finding #2

Respondents are aware of the nutrition data activities their organization finances or implements, however they were unable to share data on amounts and sufficiency of financing

The top nutrition data activity respondents finance or implement as per our framework is survey data collection, followed by routine data collection and capacity strengthening across all data categories

In the data we collected, only donors reported funding nutrition data activities

Number of activities cited, by type of nutrition data activity
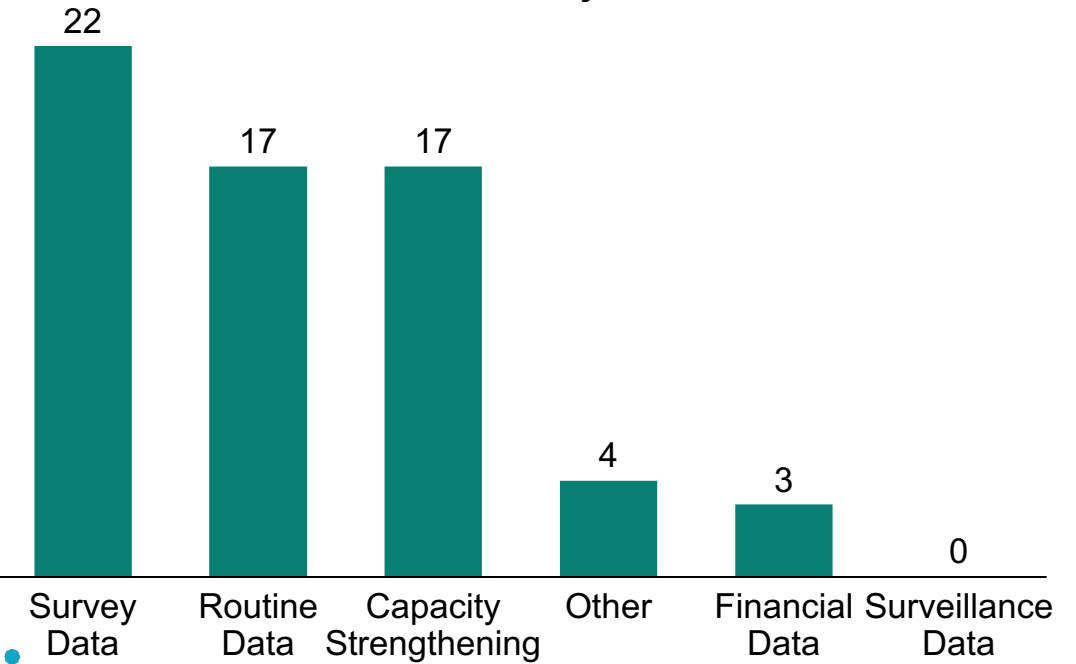
Number of organizations funding or implementing activities, by type of nutrition data activity
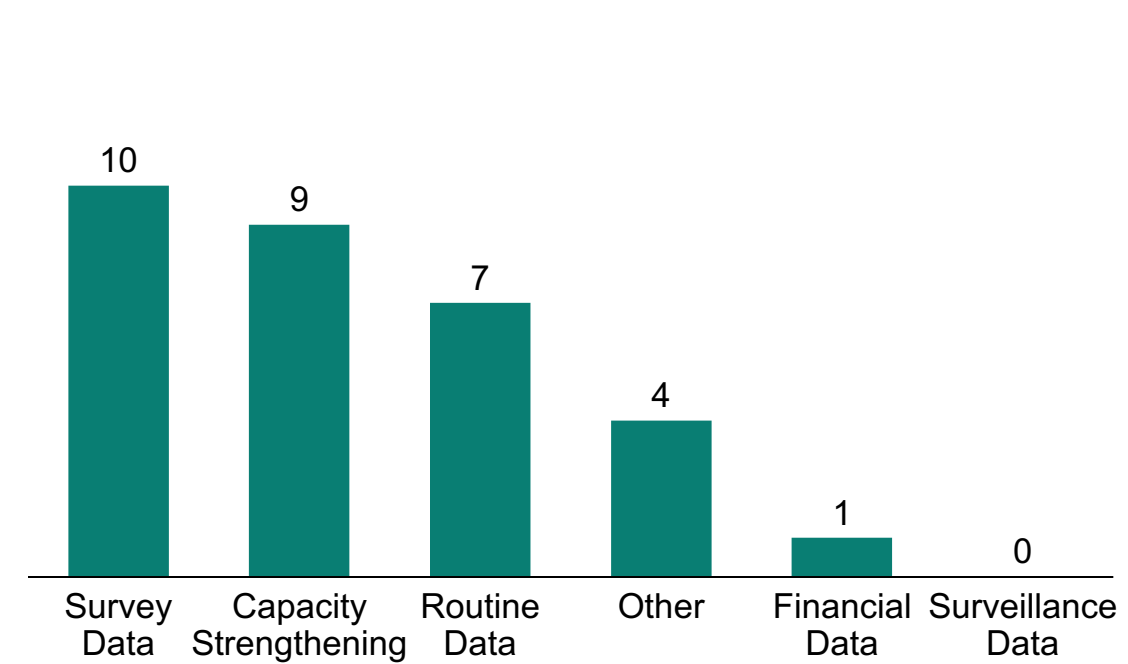
Please note some activities may be counted under more than one category

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Overall, there is limited information on financing for nutrition data activities; this relates to broader challenges with budgeting and reporting on spending in nutrition

Examples of challenges shared by respondents include:

1. Nutrition data activities are part of larger health or nutrition budgets & are not specified

2. Donors do not require data to be reported in a standardized way (e.g., by fiscal year)

3. Administrative challenges within organizations (e.g., staff turnover)

4. Data privacy concerns

Key finding #3

Nutrition data activities are included in the overall federal planning and budgeting process for nutrition, however, there is a lack of consistency and coordination across sectors in whether and how specific activities are included

Sub-finding:

3.A. Nutrition data activities are most frequently prioritized for budgeting based on the **mandate of the ministry, donor preferences, and program needs**

3.B. Many respondents noted a problem of **limited multisectoral coordination** for nutrition as a reflection of broader budgeting challenges for nutrition

Strategy 12 can be funded by both government and development partners

Activities may be funded either –

On-budget – funding is **directly channeled to government budgets** through normal budgeting processes
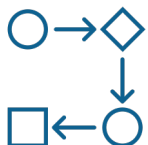
Off-budget – funding is channeled **through separate agencies and partners**

Role of a development partner depends on:

➢ Area of expertise

➢ Prioritization of interventions within the countries' strategies

➢ Type of assistance requested by the government

Nutrition data activities funded on-budget are included as part of the overall planning and budgeting process for nutrition across sectors; however, it is a small focus given activities are approved as part of larger budgets

Budget Preparation

Budget Approval

Budget Implementation

Budget Preparation
- Each sector embeds nutrition activities within their financial plans
- Nutrition data activities are often included through M&E line items
  - For nutrition policies such as the FNS, data generation and evidence-based decision making are key activities

Budget Approval

No specific process for nutrition

- More generally, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) compiles budgets from all ministries & regions and submits to parliament for approval

Budget Implementation
- Federal allocations focus on large-scale systems such as UNISE and the Resource tracking and partnership management (RTPM)
- Regional allocations often include M&E and performance management activities for specific plans (e.g., FNS)

Nutrition data activities are most frequently prioritized for budgeting based on the mandate of the ministry, donor preferences, and program needs
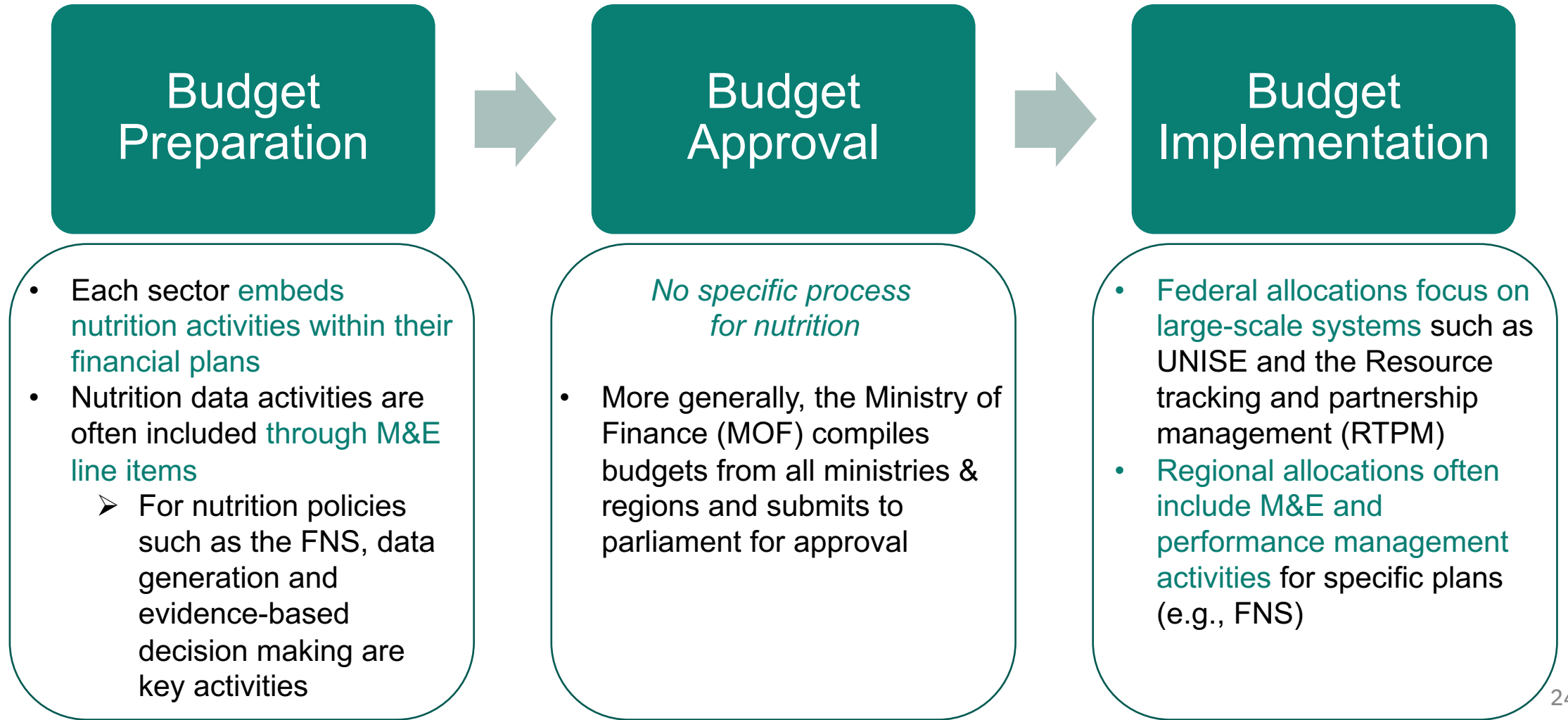
Mandate of Ministry

"In the education system, nutrition data is not part of the overall education information system, so it is not prioritized."
– Government Agency

Donor Preferences

"We take into account donor interest, the severity of the problem, the availability of funds, the organization's capacity, and the capacity of the implementers"
–Implementing Partner

Specific Program Needs

"To achieve the project's goal…we fund based on the evaluation. We provide the budget based on the project objective"
-Donor Organization

Respondents also noted **subnational plans**, **availability of funds**, and **appropriate capacity to carry out the activity** as additional factors for prioritization

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Many respondents noted a problem of limited multisectoral coordination in the budgetary process for nutrition data as a reflection of broader budgeting challenges for nutrition

" *There is a need for a strong coordination mechanism to bring together all stakeholders to determine current and future budget needs for data financing. – Implementing partner* "

Multisectoral coordination is important for ensuring–

① Adequate budget allocations are made for nutrition data

② Nutrition data & data on financing is collected through a routine system

"As nutrition is multi sector, we need to have common plan and budget which should be allotted for each sector according to that plan." -Government Agency

"There is no organized platform for routine data. Sectors must be organized, and all data collected must be stored on a single platform. " -Government Agency

EPHI, the mandated coordinating body for the FNS, noted having a

"donor-dependent budgeting system, which resulted in insufficient resource allocation for several national priority research agendas, public health emergency preparedness, and other institutional infrastructure investment."[1]

1. Ethiopia Public Health Institute. (2021). The Third Strategic Planning and Management (SPM-III) 2020/21-2029/30.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1. To improve planning and budgeting of Strategy 12, strengthen capacity and increase financing for agencies responsible for multisectoral coordination

Agencies responsible for implementation of Strategy 12, such as EPHI, may benefit from **capacity development around the planning and budgeting process** in addition to provision of **adequate financing**

The **MER-SC** is one of the three steering committees that make up the NNP (as mentioned in slide 7), and its core activity is to monitor the execution of Strategy 12 of the FNS
  ➢ Therefore, we recommend **using this platform to help multiple sectors plan and budget jointly**, which EPHI has started to lead efforts around

"The [MER-SC] should have a joint plan and budget because it will be more practical. The Ministry of Health is the program's commissioner, and it collects performance scorecards from various sectors. The program committee then presents their report to the MER-SC committee, but this committee should be encouraged to participate in joint planning and budgeting." –Implementing Partner

Recommendation #2. Strengthen capacity within sectors to first build awareness around Strategy 12 and second to measure and evaluate how partners are performing against the plan's targets

An annual operational plan is created by the MoH which includes costed strategic actions for each sector

Strengthen capacity within sectors to -
1) **build awareness** around the annual operational plan
2) **measure and evaluate how partners are performing against the plan's targets** to hold them accountable

Routinely collect data on funding from all sources to ensure funding is available for the targeted activities in Strategy 12
- Leverage the existing **Resource Tracking and Partnership Management (RTPM)** system which currently provides users at the woreda, regional, and federal levels with access to tools to facilitate effective **resource utilization and tracking**
  - MoH is working to **align the indicators of this system to the FNS priorities,** which may provide an opportunity to easily track and analyze resources for Strategy 12

Recommendation #3. Consider alternative financing options to support nutrition data activities

Options prioritized during the validation workshop as being most feasible include -

Government & Public Funds

Ex. Prioritizing funds in **existing government pooled funds to nutrition data**
- Health sector SDG pooled fund
- Health sector resiliency and equity fund

Private Sector

Ex. Expansion of domestic resources for nutrition data through **private donations** (e.g., public figures, religious institutions, professional associations, etc.)

External Development Partners

Ex. **Leverage existing innovative financing and partnership platforms** for nutrition data or data more broadly
- Power of Nutrition Multi-Donor Trust Fund

Thank you!