

Implementation of the PNG National Nutrition Policy's Strategic Action Plan (2018-2022)

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Abstract

The Papua New Guinea National Nutrition Policy (NNP) 2016-2026 and the Nutrition Strategic Action Plan 2018-2023 (NSAP) was developed to address malnutrition, especially stunting in the country. The intention of the NSAP is to provide a well-coordinated evidence-based approach that optimise resources, aligns actions and detail costs for multi-sectorial action on nutritional interventions.

This paper analyses learnings from the implementation of the National Nutrition Policy's Nutrition Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) 2018-2022. Enablers and barriers to successful implementation of the NSAP are explored and recommendations for implementation provided.

Five in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with two men and three women involved in the formulation of the 2016-2026 NNP and the NSAP 2018-2022 and have a role in policy implementing.

The qualitative analysis utilized the Forced Field Analysis to investigate driving and restraining forces in the implementation process of the NSAP. Key restraining forces included poor leadership, and lack of advocacy; implementation gap due to the Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) not fully functional, funding constraints and inadequate monitoring and evaluation system; ineffective collaboration and poor human resource capacity. Driving forces identified such as civil society alliances (CSA) engagement, coordination and capacity building had a positive effect on implementation of nutrition initiatives.

The findings suggest that implementation of NNP and NSAP needs a whole of government approach. Addressing the restraining forces can lead to the expected outcomes, while driving forces enhance change towards alternatives of successful implementation of the NSAP. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy makers and policy implementers to provide guidance for the next NSAP.

Key words: Papua New Guinea, national nutrition policy, nutrition strategic action plan, policy implementation, multisectoral collaboration.

Introduction

Malnutrition remains a developmental challenge for many countries, especially in low-middle income countries (LMIC). It is a global problem and affects health and wellbeing of humans and national development. Undernutrition's association to poor cognitive development and high child morbidity signifies how devastating the problem is globally. Despite global commitments in the Millennium Development Goals, now replaced by the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs)¹, progress in the reduction of high burden of under-nutrition is unacceptably slow (Hossain & Namusoke, 2017). In taking on the challenge, United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN, 2017) announced an important goal to 'end all forms of malnutrition and leave no one behind' by 2030. In order to accelerate progress to reach this goal, the United Nations ratify its 'first ever UN Decade of Action on Nutrition' from 2016-2025 (UNSCN, 2017, p.3).

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), malnutrition, especially stunting in children, continues to be very high in comparison with other low-to middle income countries (LMIC) despite introduction of many

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>: The SDGs, subsequent from MDG, are a collection of 17 Goals set by United Nations General Assembly in 2015.

interventions to curb this poor indicator (McGlynn et al, 2018). According to the Government of Papua New Guinea's National Nutrition Policy (2016) stunting rate is as high as 43 percent, while underweight and wasting are 24 and 14 percent respectively for children under five years of age. Stunting rate is the fourth highest in the world, which is more than double the global average (Hurney, 2017). The high rate is due mainly to the quality of diet with poor absorption of nutrients, protein and energy, rather than the quantity of food.

Poor food security and socioeconomic inequality also contributes to increase stunting (McGlynn et al., 2018). Other reports from organizations such as the PNG National Statistical Office (2010), Food and Agriculture Organisation (2014), UNICEF (Hossain et al., 2017) and International Food Policy Research Institute (2019) also attest to these issues as main contributors to high malnutrition in PNG.

In addressing malnutrition in PNG, the Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM) (2019) – as the lead agency, together with National Department of Health (NDOH), Department of Education (DoE), Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) and Department of Community Development and Religion (DCDR) as well as development partners developed the National Nutrition Plan (NNP) 2016-2026 and the Nutrition Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) 2018-2022. The intent of the NNP 2016-2026 was to enhance collaboration amongst these key government agencies and partners, with the purpose to pool resources and capacities to reduce the high burden of undernutrition and stunting in children, as well as the increasing incidence of obesity in the country.

The successful delivery of this Nutrition Strategic Action Plan's (NSAPs) activities are central to achieving the NNP's Strategic Directions, Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP)² and the SDGs of the country. Nutrition as a multi-sectoral issue requires a multi-sectoral solution. The responsibility falls on the GoPNG's multi-sector agencies and partners to develop related policies and strategies, implement associated activities and work together to successfully implement the NSAP. However, there are challenges in multisectoralism to address undernutrition as different sectors have different sets of technical skills and goals, as well as sustaining coordination mechanisms (Lamstein et al., 2016).

Since the launching of the NNP with the NSAP, there appears to be a lack of momentum from those government agencies in implementing the NSAP activities. So far, implementation mechanism on how each agency will implement the NSAP, hereafter referred to as the 'Plan,' has not been developed. Furthermore, the establishment of the Project Monitoring Unit (PMU), an office to facilitate policy engagement with all government agencies, stakeholders and partners is not in place. More importantly, the lack of leadership and ineffective management by politicians and senior managers have become an obstacle to ensure efficient systems are in place to implement the 'Plan'.

The strategic directions of the NSAP are to improve nutrition governance and to establish an interdepartmental task force to coordinate activities through a multi-sectoral mechanism by the key government agencies and partners (Department of National Planning and Monitoring, 2019; Tean et al., 2020).

This paper reports the results of a study to establish whether the country is on track to achieving the targets in addressing the three priority areas - in improving nutrition and multi-sectoral coordination, capacity building and implementation of essential nutrition interventions, of the NNP by 2022, through investigation of the implementation of the Nutrition Strategic Action Plan (NSAP).

The paper answers the overall research question of: What can be learned from the implementation of National Nutrition Policy's Nutrition Strategic Action Plan (2018-2022) and the sub questions of:

1. What are enablers to successfully implementing the NSAP?
2. What are barriers to successfully implementing the NSAP?
3. What are some suggestions for successfully implementing the NSAP?

² <https://png-data.sprep.org/dataset/medium-term-development-plan-iii-2018-2022-volume-2>

Methods

This qualitative study is based on five in-depth semi-structured interviews with policy makers, two men and three women. The participants were involved in the NNP and NSAP formulation and have a role of implementing the policy as well as some authority to make changes in the system so that frontline workers can implement activities. Three participants were government (GoPNG) employees who worked in two key government multi-sector agencies, while one participant worked for an international non-governmental organization (INGO) and the fifth participant worked for an international development partner organization.

Purposive sampling was applied since these policy makers were involved in the formulation of the NNP and the NSAP. They work in the space between the policy and frontline workers. The interviewees presented their views, perception and opinion on how they see the world in the context of implementing the NSAP and shared their experiences on how the plan can be successfully implemented (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach allows a small interview sample and gives the researcher the opportunity to utilise more than one method to form different observations of the phenomena under study (Saunders et al., 2009). Other data included in the analysis were policies, reports and grey literatures.

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data from the interviews, policy reports and grey literature (Saldaña, 2013). The analysis utilized Lewin's Force Field Analysis (FFA) framework (Swanson & Creed, 2014; Thomas, 1985) and the implementation research technique (Peters et al., 2014) to identify implementation gaps and opportunities expressed for addressing them (Saldaña, 2013; Golafshani, 2003).

Participation was on voluntary basis with informed consent and confidentiality assured. Due to the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, all interviews were conducted by telephone and skype call and lasted on average 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were conducted in April 2020.

The ethical approval for conducting the research was received from the DWU FMHS Research Committee (FRC/MHS/04-20). This document (ethical approval) was also forwarded to the NDoH Research Committee.

Results

Enablers to successful implementation of NSAP

Civil Society Alliance (CSA) Engagement

The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Civil Society Alliance (CSA) was established in late 2018 by NGOs and civil society organizations (CSO) led by Save The Children Inc. SUN CSA organized provincial workshops in six provinces (sub-national level) with the intension of creating provincial committees to collaboratively address the burden of malnutrition. The involvement of CSA at the national level includes co-facilitated monthly multi-sectoral meetings and attending various workshops and meetings to promote the NSAP implementation and SUN initiatives.

When the interviewees were asked about the role of CSA in implementing the *plan*, the most prominent statement made by the interviewees was the CSA's efforts in providing leadership to bring together partners to achieve the key objectives of the NSAP as one key informant stated:

The success [of NSAP implementation] I would say is having the SUN Alliance led by organizations such as Save the Children, leading the civil societies in the country and you guys [SUN CSA] having meetings. I think that is a success with what you guys have been doing right down to the Provincial and District levels (Development Partner Officer).

In recognizing the SUN CSA led engagements at the sub-national level, the key informants also expressed their appreciation for establishing deeper links that increased participation of other NGOs and CSOs. These organizations work in the areas of food security and nutrition, and they partner with NDOH, DAL, DOE and DCDR. The NGOs/ CSO are also involved in WASH, gender and social inclusion, women's empowerment and women in agriculture. One participant, a NGO worker explained that:

We are able to ignite the kind of attention that we [SUN CSA] need amongst our civil society organizations to seriously go into forming the provincial coalitions that would work with their provincial authorities to ensure that nutrition is the priority in their provinces. Another success that I can actually pinpoint is the kind of collaboration we are able to establish when nutrition took a center stage.

A highlight of the engagements was the participation of the key governmental multi-sectoral departments at the sub-national level. Having these line agencies participate reinforced their willingness to address nutrition interventions using their networks and established pathways especially at the community-based level. The engagements at the sub-national level has forged stronger relationships between the government officers and CSOs.

Coordination

Participants considered establishment of coordination mechanisms by multi-sector agencies and sub-national agencies key to successful implementation of the 'Plan'. They pointed out that the Government's WASH program, which is supported by UNICEF to scale up early childhood health interventions could be adapted for nutrition programs. Importantly, increased coordination with the District Health Services and the District Development Authorities resulted in funds allocated to nutrition programs.

There are few provinces for example Morobe Province, they have support from the district MP, they are given funding, they are allocated resources such as vehicles and they integrate other services through this support. So, it depends on how effective the coordination by the manager or the director of the district and the province is and how they relate with the politicians (Government Officer).

The national coordinating role is placed with the Nutrition Project Management Unit (PMU), and that role is significant to the success of the NSAP implementation, as one key informant explains:

I think the establishment of Nutrition PMU is a great idea in bringing everyone together to the table so everyone can discuss from their different sectors how their work area can interconnect with the other sectors (Development Partner Officer).

Raising awareness to politicians through advocacy is crucial, and the team took every opportunity to sensitize politicians. A delegation with the deputy minister of the DNPM attended a regional conference and shared PNG experiences and learn from other countries about SUN activities.

We started doing awareness of the Strategic Action Plan, giving them out to mainly the PHAs we visit or any officers we visit. We even gave a copy to the deputy Prime Minister. We gave him the policy and the strategic action plan. We also give to those who are interested when we talk about nutrition...The media, we did advocacy on the media, including the national papers (Government Officer).

Capacity Building

Participants spoke about strengthening organizational capacity by establishing partnership with nursing schools in the country. The lecturers and tutors were introduced to the new nutrition policy and strategies, as a result, updated nutritional knowledge and skills were taught to undergraduate and post-graduate students in colleges and universities. A government officer mentioned that "they are teaching the students the new nutrition information."

At the sub-national level, supervisory visits were conducted to assess the integration of new and revised child health programs in the health system. A government officer reported the improvement of reporting and monitoring, ensuring good governance and accountability is practiced. The participant explained that:

One success we have are some interventions from the ground happening in integrated management of malnutrition and IYCF activities happening in the facilities level, so we have the treatment of malnutrition going on, on the ground, and these are some achievement.

Individual capacity was enhanced by the NDOH nutrition team with support from UNICEF who rolled out sub-national based in-service trainings, followed by supervisory visits to assess knowledge and skills of those trained workers. The CSA also conducted trainings and awareness sessions which was co-facilitated by PHA staffs to sub-national based CSOs and government staffs to educate and promote shared vision and accomplish common results by linking nutrition to other programs.

In strengthening system capacity, the informants agreed that PMU is the organization that can enable greater collaboration amongst all key sectors. When well capacitated, PMU will become the hub for inter-sectoral discussions and collective decision making, and host for MSP and facilitate links with CSAs and other NGOs and CSOs.

I see that the PMU is an advantage into implementing the Action Plan because it is leading crucial coordinating activities essential in ensuring that partners are always complimenting and show casing. And what you are doing has to go into coordination (SUN CSA officer).

PNG continuous to benefit from its membership to the SUN Movement. SUN Movement Secretariat has secured funds to enhance CSA work in country. It continuous to provide advice and support and is committed to support the scale-up direct nutrition interventions.

From the SUN Movement, they have been very supportive to continue dialogue and any issues we have, and they keep encouraging me to go ahead. (Government officer).

Barriers to Successful Implementation of NSAP

Poor Leadership

Interviewees reported major challenges to implementing the NNP/NSAP including the absence of leadership at the political and senior management level to lead the implementation process. This is evident by non-allocation of resources and leaders not living up to their *pledge* to adequately fund the NSAP through the budgetary processes or actively seeking support from development partners to resources the 'Plan' implementation.

We are not really able to get the attention of the Prime Minister. Because if the Prime Minister can take this as the key deliverable for himself then he will ensure that the right funding is allocated, and the right monitoring is in place and key programs are developed. At some point Papua New Guinea will need some political will that will drive the implementation plans and the strategies (NGO officer).

Participants also recognized that ineffective policy awareness and poor advocacy to politicians by public servants may have resulted in the lack of interest and non-prioritization of nutrition initiatives. This has affected implementation processes at national and sub-national levels.

Implementation Gaps

The creation of Nutrition PMU is to take on the role of coordinating the NNP and NSAP across different sectors. Three interviewees were members of the Technical Working Group who recommended the establishment of the PMU. Their main cause of concern was the restricted functions of this institution, which lacks funding, resources, and staffing.

On the establishment of the PMU, I think the barrier is the Government itself. Those higher up who are supposed to be supporting PMU are not funding PMU. The structure is there however there is no human resource and so the issue is funding and human resource (Development Partner Officer).

The participants asserted that financial resources is central to the implementation of the NSAP. The inadequate funding of the PMU's operations and poor resourcing by multi-sectoral agencies to nutrition activities is detrimental to effective implementation of the 'Plan'. Only a few activities can be rolled out in few provinces due to funding constraints and capacity issues.

From the national level we have money allocated according to the annual activity plan but the money is not sufficient and so most the activities are implemented from the funding from the partners like UNICEF or WHO, with assistance from the provinces. ... many factors are contributing to poor implementation (Government Officer).

One of the challenge is the donor support, because I do not know whether they actually fund nutrition because they are not giving much attention to nutrition. Most of them do not have any allocation for nutrition (NGO officer).

Lack of Quality Data

Two participants, both government officers commented on the challenge of collection of data, especially at the sub-national level where most of activities are implemented, despite conducting training and mentorship for workers. The inconsistency in data collection is affecting program implementation and procurement of supplementary food for malnourish children. They added that collation of nutrition-sensitive intervention data is even difficult.

In terms of the information of the implementation of this plan, we have poor data. Database is the problem. In terms of nutrition-sensitive data, we collect but is very small as we collect from 6 Provinces or less than 10 provinces. That is not from all the facilities or all the communities, only from certain districts (Development partner officer).

Poor Collaboration

All respondents flagged that poor collaboration is a major concern for the implementation of the NSAP. Multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination is ineffective and different agencies are working in silos. Although in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a major distraction, there is evidence on the lack of cooperation from the multi-sectoral agencies to support the PMU to ensure deliveries on its mandated responsibilities. Ineffective mobilization of supports from donor partners, and lack of empowerment of the private sector to support NSAP implementation in food security, food fortification and small to medium enterprises are key areas highlighted in the interviews. The respondents call for greater collaboration by all partners and stakeholders to build organizational and systemic capacities.

With the scares resources that we have we need partnering because we are not working in isolation from each other. We just have to try to understand what the other agencies are doing..., we're working in isolation from each other and we don't know who is doing what (Government Officer).

Participants mentioned the poor linkage between the national and the sub-national level because of absence of collaboration is affecting delivery of essential nutrition services. As a result, the limited resources are not utilized effectively.

Inadequate Human Resources Capacity

Participants claimed that limited resources has created animosity and affected performance. What is most concerning is the poor performance of officers who were trained during in-service trainings and received supervision but are underperforming.

Capacity building comes down to who is the coordinator. When we train people and they don't implement what is being trained, the coordinator has to enforce what is happening on the ground (Government officer).

Importantly, the respondents expressed their concern about the lack of skilled personal in the workforce. Untrained and unqualified personnel are managing programs. The workforce engaged in carrying out nutrition initiatives are not technically skilled and are inexperienced. There are also instances of officers performing multiple roles which have led to poor motivation and unsatisfactory performance.

The other problem now is, there is no coordination at the district and the sub national level. We don't have any nutritionist or even nutrition officer so they can coordinate the implementation of the program. And when you ask somebody to do it, that somebody is wearing other caps, it's an additional duty so they are not there and are not doing what you taught them to do, and they don't use the skills that they acquire (Government officer).

Respondents highlighted the lack of nutritionists and dieticians in the country. Universities in this country do not provide these courses.

Opportunities for Successful Implementation of NSAP

Leadership and Policy Advocacy

Respondents clearly stated that to build demand for action, politicians need to provide the leadership and political commitment in the 'Plan' implementation. Politicians can create momentum and also drive policy integration with other government initiatives. Politicians can sustain momentum also by utilizing their allocated discretionary funding to finance nutrition related activities.

When I talk about the politicians, my target to involve them is because politicians' support through their DSIP and PSIP. They can be able to provide some funding for implementation of this policy, ...so we need to communicate with politicians so they are fully informed about the importance of this policyin this budget (Government officer).

Plan Resourcing

Interviewees recognized that in-service training is seen as an opportunity to build skills and knowledge, and this is complemented by mentorship and supervisory visits to further enhance skills and knowledge. More importantly, there is a need to train specialist cadre of workers in nutritionist and dieticians to scale up specialized interventions and to negotiate and manage priority settings to address key policy areas.

The interviewees suggested the improvement of multi-sectoral collaboration and donor coordination to accelerate progress and harmonized, aligned and jointly implement related programs and projects in the 'Plan'. They pointed out that lessons can be learned from the experience of current interventions, such as the World Banks' Fast Track Initiative³ and Productive Partnership in Agriculture Project⁴, and the WASH Policy⁵. This opportunity should be used to build momentum from successful outcomes. For this to work successfully, an interviewee noted the need for:

the establishment of the high level working committee which comprise of all the secretaries of the multi-sectors which will be the team that oversees the implementation of these policy initiatives to ensure that what is required from them [interventions] are

³ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/809771561531103886/pdf/Success-Stories-with-Reducing-Stunting-Lessons-for-PNG.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2014/12/02/papua-new-guinea-productive-partnerships-in-agriculture-project>

⁵ <https://png-data.sprep.org/dataset/papua-new-guinea-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash-policy-2015>

complied with....With the scarce resources that we have, we need partnering because we are not working in isolation from each other, we're just have to try to understand what the other agencies are doing (Government officer).

Strengthening Sub-National Implementation

All interviewees agree that scaling up implementation at the sub-national is crucial. The current status at the national level of disjointed actions by multi-sectors is a good learning experience. They emphasized the establishment of coordinating mechanisms, strengthening nutrition actor networks and creating linkage with national level, multi-stakeholder platforms and NGO/ CSOs. Processes for effective monitoring and enforcement of key enabling policies and strategic directions are crucial for the 'Plan's' success.

A participant described how sub-national mechanism can work as follows:

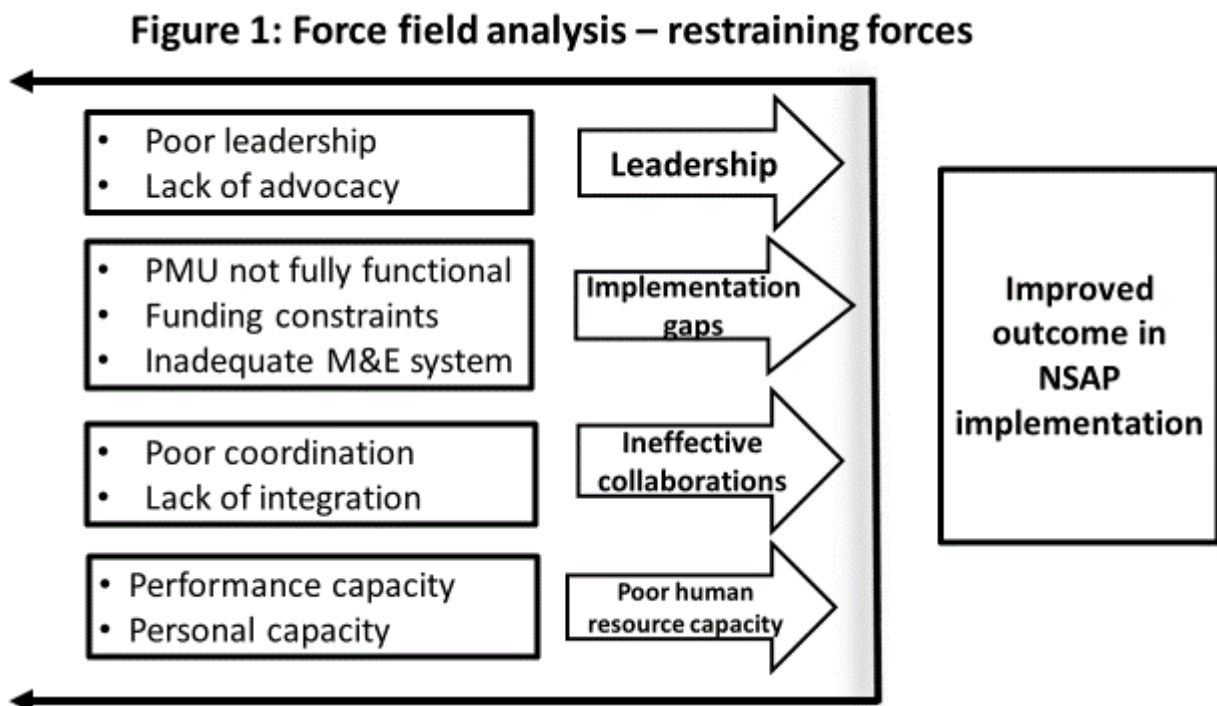
Budget pass by parliament you obviously know there would be funding....So what I will suggest is that each Provincial Authority establish their own nutrition committee and if you have a nutrition committee at a provincial level that is coordinated by individual among the department, that person should be linked to the National Department of Planning and there would be a stronger coordination and supervision and follow-up of the plans that are being implemented at the Provincial level (Government Officer).

Discussion

Implementation Impediments

The discussion is structured using the Force Field Analysis. First, the restraining forces, as outlined in Figure 1 are discussed. These restraining forces push in one way contributing to poor implementation of the NSAP. Second, the current situation is presented in Figure 2, which includes the driving forces moving in the opposite direction to the restraining forces. Unfreezing involves forces that support the implementation of the NSAP to be strengthened and restraining forces decreased. Options for change are discussed and how these changes can be reinforced leading to refreezing (MacDougall, 2007).

Figure 1 outlines the explanation of restraining forces to the successful implementing of the NSAP.



The FFA has proved to be useful in assisting with diagnosing problems and ascertaining solutions. Figure 1 describes some key bottlenecks in the delivery of the NSAP. Mwadime (2012) noted that three factors generally affect nutrition policy implementation; (1) awareness by leadership on importance of nutrition, (2) political commitment, and (3) funding to implement activities. While much is known about funding of nutrition-specific interventions, not much is known about costing of nutrition-sensitive interventions. Funding is crucial to achieving acceptable outcomes in the NSAP. An indicative cost of the 'Plan' is 387 million PGK with two thirds of the cost allocated to 'essential nutrition intervention' and the rest to capacity building and nutrition governance and systems. Inadequate funding from the government has been blamed for poor scale up of nutrition activities. There is a need for external financial assistance and a mix of funding sources from donors and partners to close this funding gap. Kennedy et al. (2016) suggested each agency supporting nutrition programs should have a line item in the budget.

Lack of political leadership was identified as a resisting force to the implementation of the 'Plan' and a major threat to undermining achievements made so far. A similar study in Ethiopia describe the call for strong and visible leadership at the highest level is crucial (Kennedy et al., 2016). According to Baker et al. (2018), political leadership and commitment is key as ultimately it drives performance, decision making and resource allocation. Political commitment is not only placing nutrition on government agenda but mobilizing political systems, embracing policies, earmarking resources and managing responsibilities with the understanding that eventually will result in a positive outcome (Baker et al., 2018).

Leadership commitment to the NNP and NSAP is reflected by how much resources are allocated to its implementation, and the mere presence of the nutrition policy and plan is not an adequate indicator for political commitment to reducing malnutrition (Bryce et al., 2008).

Policy advocacy is key to sustaining political and leadership engagement to keep nutrition high on the agenda. Advocates and duty bearers can use 'policy windows' to advocate for policy changes or creation of new policies to strengthen action on nutrition (Cullerton et al., 2018).

One factor contributing to the policy implementation gap can be attributed to the Nutrition Project Management Unit's (PMU) failure to lead the action and coordination. Hence there is a need to adequately resource the PMU to advocate for leadership, policy continuity, manage collaborations and multi-sectoral efforts (Acosta, 2011).

An important aspect of implementation of the 'Plan' is monitoring and evaluation (M&E), especially at the sub-national level (Lutter et al., 2013). Part of the NSAP's M&E framework was adopted from the National Health Plan (NHP-2011-2020), although a complete set of nutrition-specific indicators is missing.

Poor collaboration was expressed as a concern by participants that affects vertical coordination mechanisms and slows down effective nutrition initiatives. Literature regarding collaboration has examined vertical and horizontal collaboration and show collaboration remains a challenge. (Gillespie et al., 2013).

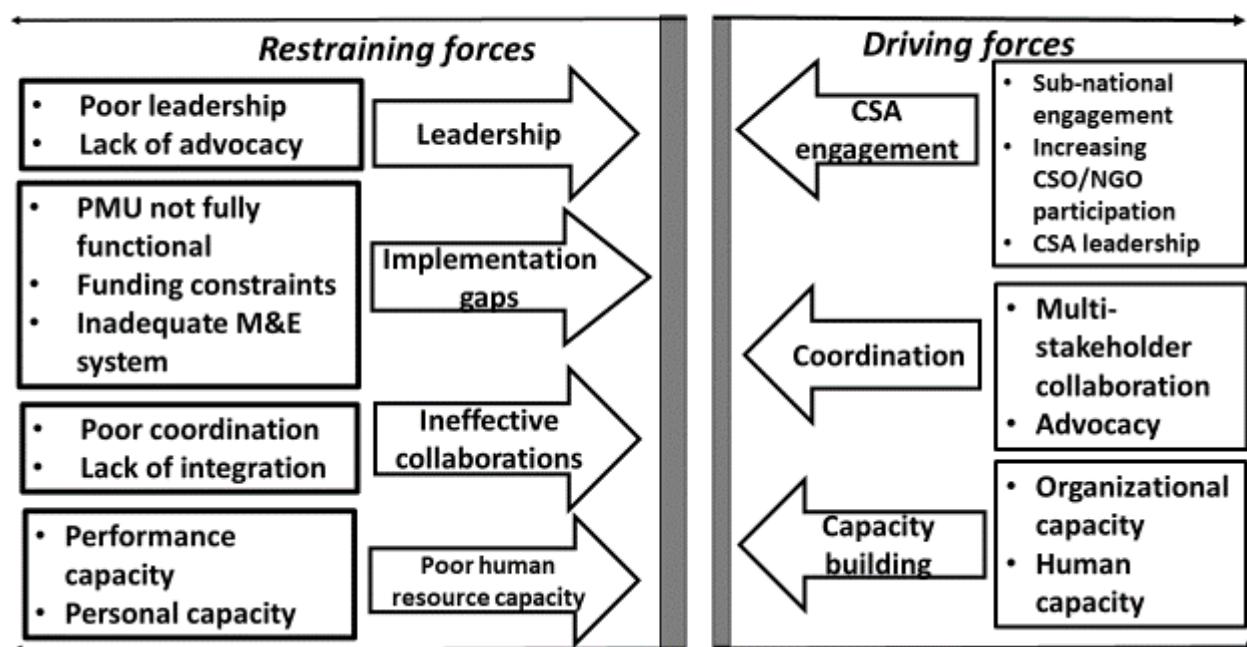
Another important aspect expressed in this study is the inadequate number of workforce at the national and sub-national level, including the PMU. Individual and organizational capacities in nutrition-specific intervention is limited due to the absence of nutritionist and dieticians in the country. The findings show that the workforce at different levels as a restraining factors to execute effective coordination, lead and sustain engagement especially when implementing cross cutting nutrition initiatives through a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach (Kennedy et al., 2016).

Implementation Opportunities

The most prominent subject discussed was the implementation of nutrition-specific interventions in the health sector, child feeding, treatment and prevention of child malnutrition and maternal health services. The health programs provide the most data for monitoring and evaluation of the Plan, and contributes to the knowledge and evidence of scaled up interventions in the communities. Similarly, the SUN CSA engagement at the national and sub-national level ignited the recognition that was required to accelerate nutrition related activities, specifically the nutrition-sensitive interventions. Importantly, the success of CSA engagements is a testament to the coordination efforts undertaken to enable successful implementation of the NSAP. The coordination process includes the horizontal associations which refers to coordination at the national level while vertical associations that pertains to coordination of activities at the sub-national level.

The FFA identified restraining and driving forces which move in different directions. Figure 2 presents the current situation. Driving forces require attention while dealing with the restraining forces. For changes to happen unfreezing of restraining forces involves the move of the forces on the left towards the middle (MacDougall, 2007).

Figure 2: Force field analysis – restraining and driving forces



According to Benson (2019), politicians and development planners usually underinvest in nutrition because they lack understanding of the effects of undernutrition on health and economic development. Political advocacy and awareness is key to sustaining political and leadership engagement to keep nutrition high on the agenda. Baker et al. (2018) pointed out that attaining political commitment is not only having nutrition on the government agenda but mobilizing political systems, embracing policies, earmarking resources and managing responsibilities with the understanding this will result in a positive outcome. Bryce et al. (2008) observed that the commitment of politicians to a nutrition policy is reflected by the amount of resources is allocated to its implementation. Political leadership at all levels can amicably address problems that may arise and – importantly, bridge sectoral silos and motivate multi-stakeholder platforms (Gillespie et al., 2013; Gillespie et al., 2015).

Advocacy of the 'Plan' is central to its successful implementation, and so advocates and duty bearers should use 'policy windows' to advocate for policy changes or creation of new policies to strengthen action on nutrition (Cullerton et al., 2018). Popularization of the policy is also essential and so all

nutrition implementers have a responsibility to accelerate social mobilization of the policy, starting with the politicians and bureaucratic leadership.

For policy advocacy to have a foothold, the priority for the GoPNG with the support of the development partners is to adequately resource the PMU to advocate for leadership and policy continuity (Acosta, 2011) and manage collaborations and multi-sectoral efforts. Furthermore, a crucial role of the PMU is to ensure that nutrition related activities are implemented jointly because each multi-sector agencies cannot effectively implement the NSAP independently while trying to accomplish their key sectoral priorities.

The tasks of coordinating efforts when resources are limited is made harder if multi-sectoral agencies are seen to be competing for resources (Benson, 2019; Ecker et al., 2012). For that reason, there is a need to also strengthen the national-level coordination mechanism, in Nutrition Advisory Committee, as described in the NSAP, to provide policy and strategic guidance and overarching leadership in promoting integrated programming in nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that the implementation of the NNP and NSAP was restrained by many forces including poor leadership, funding constraints, lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and inadequate human resource capacities (Mozaffarian et al., 2018). These themes emerged from the FFA that provided a rich understanding of restraining and driving forces in the implementation process of the 'Plan'. Swanson & Creed (2014, p.44) confirm that change is a complex process and does not happen quickly because "what happens in reality is far more unsightly, chaotic, and rebellious organization all together" (Harford, 2011, p.42; as cited in Swanson & Creed, 2014).

The findings suggest that the NNP and NSAP needs a whole of government approach. Only through improved leadership and collaboration, adequate resourcing and effective coordination, strategies can lead to the expected outcomes. At the same time driving forces enhance change of certain situations towards alternatives of successful implementation of the 'Plan'.

An implication of this study for policy makers and people of influence is to understand the restraining factors to address and mitigate them. This research can provide guidance for the next NSAP (2022-2026) formulation and implementation process.

Recommendation 1: Political leadership is crucial to promote commitment-building activities to remove bottlenecks in the NSAP implementation. This can be achieved through enhanced political dialogue and advocacy, with a view to elevate nutrition to the Deputy Prime Ministers' office (in-charge of Social Sector) to enhance inter-ministry cohesion as an 'authorizing environment' to facilitate policy continuity. The Nutrition Advisory Committee (Department of National Planning and Monitoring, 2019, p. 21) need to be accountable for collaboratively implement the 'Plan'. Coordinated actions need to be sustained which includes accountability and harmonization of nutrition activities.

Recommendation 2: Revision of the new NSAP, to align with the SUN 3.0 four strategic objectives. With the leadership of Nutrition Advisory Committee through the PMU, seek appropriate technical assistance from SUN Movement. The aim of this assistance is to support the development of policies, strategic plans and M&E framework for multi-sectoral agencies to strengthen strategic capacities and legal frameworks to improve NNP implementation. Enhance the adaptation and integration of multi-sectoral programs with emphasis on building individual, organizational, and systemic capacities and funding opportunities.

Recommendation 3: With support from SUN Movement, led by SUN CSA focal person strengthen civil society mobilization through the civil society alliance (CSA). The aim is to seek new

membership at the sub-national to scale up community-based nutrition interventions, and hold the Government and its partners accountable to the implementation of the NSAP where necessary. Multisector agencies strategic plans are focused on community-based initiatives and equity-focused programming and the CSA and CSOs can align their activities to these plans.

Recommendation 4: Establishment of sub-national (provincial) nutrition committees to lead coordination and planning processes under the leadership of the PMU and CSA. This focal point for all nutrition related interventions has the function to address inequities and rights of the communities and provide accountability and oversight of the NSAP implementation. Local political and local government support can be harnessed through decentralized budget and planning processes to scale up community interventions.

Recommendation 5: Through political leadership and direction from the Nutrition Advisory Committee, explore opportunities for increasing sustainable investment, especially through government and district development funding, supported by evidence-informed action with the use of innovative financing tools to support planning and budgetary processes. Engagement with donors and development partners should increase financial opportunities. Stable source of funding either from government or partners allows scaling up and provides opportunities for capacity development, acquisition of evidence and experiences.

Recommendation 6: Nutrition Advisory Committee with support from partners to establish an Information Management System as a data sharing hub in the PMU to collate nutrition related data from the multi-sector agencies, partners and CSAs. The monitoring data should be analyzed inform planning, budgetary and interventions scale up. Knowledge and evidence relays on timely and reliable information to inform planning and decision making.

Recommendation 7: Respective multi-sector agencies in collaboration with the PMU, sub-national nutrition committees and CSAs collaboratively build skills and capacities of nutrition personals. Focus on increasing expertise of duty bearers, especially the front line workers in health, agriculture, social services and education.

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