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**Development of the National Nutrition Strategy for Vietnam**

**Inception Report-Final**

**28th January 2021**

**Introduction**

This Inception Report is the first of four N4D deliverables. It is based on the Terms of Reference (ToR), contract, a kick-off meeting (January 12th) with country stakeholders and a number of smaller follow up meetings to elucidate and agree ways of working, methodological considerations and the timeline for developing and completing the National Nutrition Strategy (NNS). As far as possible, the report sets out what activities and processes are foreseen to be needed over the coming 4.5 months (January-May 2021) of N4D support and advice. N4D will need to adopt a highly flexible approach given remote working, national planned holidays/significant political events which will limit contact time, the disruption to people’s day to day routines with Covid-19 and the coordination and communication demands on all involved. This report was shared with Dr Phuong, the National Nutrition Consultant and Do Hong Phuong from UNICEF to input and ensure it reflects agreed ways of working and methodology prior to finalisation.

**Ways of Working**

N4D and the in-country key actors who are driving the development of the new NNS (MoH core drafting team, multi-sector review team, UNICEF and the national consultant) will work collaboratively and closely over the coming 4.5 months. Tasks, deliverables and deadlines for all stakeholders our outlined in the table at the end of this report. An initial kick-off meeting between N4D, the National Consultant (Dr Phuong Huynh who is the NIN Deputy Director of the Nutrition Training Centre) and the MoH (Dr Quoc and Dr Kien) Preventive Health Department was held on January 12th, 2021 served to introduce each other, to discuss our ways of working, timings and areas of responsibility. It is envisaged that there will be a number of meetings between N4D and different in-country actors serving different purposes as outlined below under Methodology. An introductory meeting is scheduled to be held with the core drafting team in the first week of February.

*NNS Core Drafting Team*

Within Vietnam, the NNS Core Drafting Team is made up of ten technical specialists with specific areas of responsibility for different parts of the NNS and ‘hold the pen’ for writing the NNS. Each member of the Core Drafting Team has technical specialism and will be taking responsibility for the section of the NNS relating to their expertise (for example micronutrient malnutrition, maternal and child health etc). The team is led by Dr Phuong Huynh at NIN. Meetings are chaired by the Director of NIN (Dr Tuyen) or sometimes, by the Deputy Director of NIN (Dr Mai). The meetings are also supervised and supported by officers at MoH (Dr Kien and Dr Quoc) to keep the leaders of the MoH informed of the progress and to make sure that the content of NNS aligns with Government formalities. Dr Kien is also the facilitator for linking the Drafting team with administration work in the MoH.

*Dr Phuong and N4D*

Dr Phuong and N4D will work very closely over the coming 4.5-month period. Each ‘party’ has a 35-day ToR and a first step was to ensure the respective ToR are clear in terms of roles, responsibilities and deliverables and most importantly, provide the right level of support and engagement to deliver the NNS jointly. A meeting to discuss the ToRs in more detail was held in the second week of January. The respective roles and responsibilities for Dr Phuong and N4D for each task are outlined in more detail below.

*Multi-stakeholder Review Group*

A larger group (totalling around 30+ people) from other sectoral ministries will be tasked with reviewing the draft NNS outline and for contributing different sector perspectives and roles as needed. N4D will interact with this larger team as required and this will be scheduled and facilitated by Dr Phuong. To the extent possible, it will be vital to ensure adequate participation in NNS development and ownership of the final product from all relevant sectors. Each sector will need to integrate relevant objectives and actions in the NNS into their own sectoral plans and budgets. The draft text for the multi-sectoral narrative is being written by Dr Phuong.

*Office of the Prime Minister*

High level political leadership will also be vital to convene stakeholders from across government sectors and development partners and ensure accountability against commitments made in the NNS. Focal points from each sector have been identified and have agreed to review and contribute as required to the sector specific portions of the new nutrition strategy. The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for signing off on the NNS and ensuring that it is well aligned with the overall national development strategy, plans and governance arrangements.

*Other actors*

There will also be a need to clarify ways in which development partners including donors, SUN Movement related Networks (UN, business, civil society and academia) can participate in the development and communication of the strategy and, further down the road, clarify their role in its implementation. Identification of key development partners will be an iterative process during the assignment drawing on advice from NIN and UNICEF who will lead this in country engagement process.

**Working Language**

Language is not expected to present an obstacle to the process and timings of N4D deliverables, but it will be considered at meetings with country actors to navigate this as best we can. Translation services exist in country (outside NIN) and there will be periods when N4D (and other stakeholders potentially) will need a rapid English translation to be able to input. For example, a summary of the recently conducted review of the previous NNS (2010-20) has been rapidly translated for the N4D team. Language will also need to be managed during larger stakeholder meetings to ensure all country actors can engage in the discussions and have an equal voice. In these meetings, Dr Phuong will provide interpreter support as best she can. UNICEF in country translation support is also on hand if necessary.

**Methodology**

There are 7 identified activities culminating in four deliverables which N4D are accountable for with methodological implications outlined below.

1. Inception Report (Deliverable 1)
2. Global and Regional Review (Deliverable 2)
3. Current nutrition situation in Vietnam (Deliverable 3)
4. Participation in meetings
5. Review and support the drafts of the NNS
6. Support preparation of the NNS presentation
7. Produce an End of Assignment Report (Deliverable 4)

*Global and Regional Review*

A bespoke 5-page briefing note for use at country level to inform the NNS will be developed which will require N4D, with input from Dr Phuong, to collate, review and synthesise key global and regional documents and resources which set out current nutrition relevant goals and targets, normative or operational guidance, examples of good practice in the articulation of national strategies where possible drawing on ‘cherry picked’ examples from the region (and potentially more broadly). An important consideration of good practice will be the extent to which a strategy lends itself to operationalisation given that the Vietnam NNS will very rapidly be operationalised into a 5-year implementation plan. N4D will develop the first draft of this bespoke briefing note and seek feedback from Dr Phuong before finalising (note she has 3 days assigned to this activity).

Where necessary, N4D will reach out via email or via zoom calls to a small number of (up to 5) global and regional actors to source relevant information as needed. The SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) has already been contacted and a discussion held with the Country Liaison Team (CLT) focal point for Vietnam to obtain materials and insights. We envisage a close working relationship with the SMS and SUN Networks throughout this assignment.

It is likely that between 10 and 20 documents/resources will be reviewed for this deliverable. These will include, WHA and SDG targets, the 2020 Global Nutrition Report and allied Country and Regional Profiles, current normative and general guidance on major technical subject areas of importance to Vietnam and covering undernutrition (child wasting and stunting, maternal undernutrition, low birth weight and infant growth failure, micronutrient malnutrition and nutrition considerations for other vulnerable age groups including adolescents, people of age) as well as current thinking on food systems and healthy diets, tackling overweight, obesity and diet related non-communicable diseases. Resources linked to other global and regional overviews on, for example, climate and Covid 19 risks and mitigation and addressing the nutrition needs of marginalised groups will be included.

In a recent assignment for the SUN Movement, N4D proposed the strengthening or establishment of regional, multi-stakeholder working groups for facilitating cross-country exchange of knowledge and learning (including the development of national nutrition strategies and plans) and the brokering of country support. The development of the Vietnam NNS as well as the completion of similar strategies in other countries in the region, e.g., Cambodia, provides an excellent opportunity to convene such a working group in the South East Asia region, starting with an event to share learning between countries on NNS development. N4D will engage with SUN Movement structures, the ASEAN Taskforce on Maternal and Child Health, the regional offices of UNICEF and WHO and the Southeast Asia Public Health Nutrition (SEA-PHN) Network, to explore the possibilities of organising such an event and sourcing funding for it. This would not be a deliverable within this (GNC Technical Alliance) funded assignment and is subject to additional funding being sourced but, it would be a way in which N4D could provide added value to the Vietnam strategy development process.

*Current nutrition situation in Vietnam*

Working very closely with Dr Phuong, relevant documents (numbers are unclear at this stage but will encompass national surveys, policies, prior strategies, development partner reports, reviews and landscape analyses) will be compiled and reviewed by N4D to discern the ‘headlines’ for understanding the current nutrition situation in country. This exercise will form the basis of the introduction to the NNS and therefore, needs to clearly set out the current nutrition trends, the burden of malnutrition, equity and spatial distribution concerns as well as the potential ‘threats’ to nutrition (e.g., climate fragility, Covid 19, migration, urbanisation, demographic changes) and capture the key supporting multi-sectoral policies and developments, governance arrangements and current and forecasted levels of nutrition investment. This process will start with N4D developing the country situation outline to agree with Dr Phuong so as to start the drafting.

By close of day one of the assignment, around 30 documents had been shared with N4D for review and synthesis. Since then a further 20 documents have been sourced. It is anticipated that up to 50 documents will need to be reviewed in order to generate this deliverable. There are a number of important considerations for this country analysis. These include; how nutrition is integrated into Vietnam’s national development and sector plans, nutrition trends over time and what is underpinning these trends, the role out, coverage and enabling environment of, and for, nutrition specific and sensitive interventions, the adequacy of information systems to inform nutrition planning, resilience building initiatives amongst shock-prone and vulnerable populations (in particular ethnic minorities) and progress in addressing the evolving overweight and obesity challenges facing large urban populations.

*Participation in TWG meetings and making recommendations*

A schedule will be drawn up with Dr Phuong to work with the TWG and wider stakeholder groups. Prior to these meetings, an agenda will be set and agreement on pre-meeting preparation requirements and minute taking responsibility within NIN. It is too early to determine the precise scheduling of these meetings over the 4.5-month period, but it is likely at least one meeting will be held per month with the TWG (either collectively or in smaller groups across technical themes) and one meeting with the wider multi-stakeholder group culminating in attending the NNS presentation.

There will be very regular bilateral meetings between Dr Phuong and N4D and email exchanges throughout. Dr Phuong will ensure efficient communication in country and cc where appropriate colleagues in country into emails and help determine who needs to be invited onto which call. At the same time, UNICEF has a pivotal role in country and a strong desire to support the realisation of the NNS. Thus, although by and large, N4D will correspond directly with Dr Phuong to keep communications as streamlined as possible, it is anticipated that UNICEF will participate in many meetings and will be copied into all significant emails.

As Vietnam is 7 hours ahead of the UK and 6 hours ahead of Spain (the locations of the N4D team), we have agreed that meetings will be held at 8am UK time to enable country staff to attend from 3pm and finish by 5pm their time. N4D will be respectful of time differences and be as flexible as possible to ensure good communications.

*Review and support the drafts and completion of the NNS*

The Core Drafting Team had produced ahead of N4D engagement a draft outline for the NNS structure which needed rapid review by N4D so that sign off could be achieved ideally in January (by the Prime Minister’s Office) and ahead of the New Year holiday in February. N4D undertook this rapid review during the inception period and used a number of key resources to underpin the feedback on the draft outline ([SUN Movement checklist on good quality national nutrition plans,](http://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/front-page.jpg) and [MQSUN+ Multi Sectoral Planning Toolkit](https://mqsunplus.path.org/multisectoral-nutrition-planning-toolkit/) and the recently developed country Cambodia second NNS 2019 to 2023). N4D provided written feedback and have since had two meetings to discuss the recommended changes.

Beyond the structure for the NNS, N4D will develop and support the sharing of the briefing documents (2&3) to feed into the NNS drafting process and utilise the remote meetings to discuss the contents and support the embedding of the briefs into the NNS.

*Support preparation of the NNS presentation[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Towards the end of the assignment, a larger group meeting will be held to provide an opportunity to present the NNS chapters. A PowerPoint will be prepared by Dr Phuong and supported in the content and, language permitting, co-delivery by N4D. It may prove to be useful to record the presentation for wider uptake particularly, for sub-national actors.

*End of Assignment Report*

A template for reporting on the main contributions to the NNS by N4D provided by GNC Technical Alliance, will be completed in May 2021. This will be a short and succinct summary of the main deliverables, evidencing completion of each of these and providing narrative on the headline activities underpinning N4Ds work.

**Tasks, deliverables and timeline**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tasks** | **International Consultant (IC)** | **National Consultant (NC)** | **Drafting Team** | **Multi-sector review team** | **UNICEF** | **Deliverables** | **Timeline** |
| Agree ways of working and roles and responsibilities, lines of communication, methodology and timeline for deliverables with NC, drafting team, UNICEF and N4D/IC | Draft inception report  Co-lead orientation on ways of working for all parties | Support IC to draft inception report | No role. Will be informed | No role | Comment on inception report | Inception Report | Jan 28th  Jan 12th  Jan 18th |
| Collate documentation related to strategy development | Identify and collate relevant global and regional documentation | Identify and collate nationally relevant documentation and any relevant regional material  Arrangement for translation or briefing on documentation where language barrier necessitates | No role | No role | Provide necessary documentation as necessary | Shared dropbox for NC, N4D and others with documentation | Jan 12th onwards |
| Prepare bespoke briefing paper on global and regional target setting and policies, strategies and plans relevant to Vietnam NNS | Draw on global and regional documentation and series of interviews with global and regional actors to draft briefing paper | Provide comments on brief to N4D and ensure key findings contribute to NNS drafting team deliberations | No role | No role | Comment on briefing paper | Briefing paper on global and regional target setting, policies and strategies. | February |
| Collaboration between National Consultant, UNICEF, N4D and the drafting team to produce a Vietnam situation analysis to inform major issues for inclusion in the NNS | Read all documentation related to Vietnam nutrition situation and conduct small number of interviews with country actors  Co-write situation analysis briefing paper with NC | Co-write country situation analysis with N4D drawing on expertise of drafting team and UNICEF | To give comments afterward | No roles. May provide comments of Draft 1 of NNS | Comment on briefing paper | Nutrition situation analysis briefing paper for Vietnam | February |
| Produce outline of structure of strategy | Comment on outline of NNS produced by NC and drafting team | Discuss N4D comments and present to MoH | Be informed and may provide comments | No role |  | Final draft of NNS outline for presentation to MoH | January |
| Integration and utilisation of key results from briefing papers into development process of the new NNS. | Participation in relevant technical working group sessions to ensure findings from briefing papers and other sources, feed into the discussions.  Commenting on and editing drafts of sections of the NNS as these are written and potentially drafting discrete sections where agreed with drafting team and there is comparative advantage | Working with core and wider drafting team to integrate findings from briefing papers  Ensuring N4D are involved as necessary in TWG sessions.  Draft sections of strategy on sector contributions and integrate comments from multi-sector review team  Provide translation during meetings  Prepare notes of each technical working session | Working under the lead of national consultants to develop the Objectives and Solutions/approaches part of the NNS | No specific role though may provide comments of Draft 1 of NNS |  | Draft Strategy | From February and throughout |
| Support national consultant and drafting team to prepare a presentation on draft NNS to relevant stakeholders | Support in planning and reviewing presentation including agenda and Power Point | Prepare presentation with drafting team  Capture feedback from stakeholders at presentation to be included in final NNS draft |  | May provide comments of Draft 1 of NNS |  |  | March (discuss country visit) |
| Finalise NNS based on comments/inputs received from stakeholders | Support drafting team and national consultant in finalisation of NNS following stakeholder feedback, to ensure technical quality and alignment with international standards, good practice and evidence | Coordinate sharing of comments and redrafts between drafting team and N4D in the finalisation. |  |  |  |  | May |

1. It is recognised by all that a visit to Vietnam by the N4D team would bring added benefits to the process of supporting the NNS developments and to consider the follow-on activity of articulating the implementation plan. However, given the current Covid 19 situation and stringent quarantine regulations in place in Vietnam, travel is not currently envisaged. However, with rapid changes occurring in the UK with vaccination roll-out, the potential for a country visit will be reviewed with the Vietnam team in March. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)