



# NIPN AT A GLANCE

3rd Quarter September, 2020



## HAPPY ETHIOPIAN NEW YEAR 2013



### Overview of the MER SC Meeting Held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2020

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The multisectoral National Nutrition Program Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER SC) monitors the performance of National Nutrition Program (NNP). It also provides guidance to the Ethiopian National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN).

Chaired by the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), the MER SC meets quarterly to discuss the NNP's performance, share nutrition-related research and evidence and address pressing challenges.

On August 25, the MER SC met virtually for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic with Masresha Tessema, Director of Food Science and Nutrition Research Directorate (FSNRD) welcoming participants and Aregash Samuel, NIPN Coordinator, chairing the meeting. The agenda covered five topics of interest: the Monitoring and

Evaluation (M&E) framework of the draft Food and Nutrition Strategy (FNS), the progress analysis of NNP II indicators, NIPN updates, Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) bulletin and findings from the review of the nutrition policy landscape in Ethiopia.

Abera Dibabe from the Ministry of Health (MOH) presented the draft FNS' M&E framework which included: an overview of the NNP II implementation challenges, the FNS strategic objectives, a description of the FNS governance structures from national to kebele level, sectoral integration of food and nutrition indicators and targets, with reporting requirements and timelines. He provided examples of impact, outcome and output performance indicators and the balanced score card through which sectors' performance will be measured.

Dr. Meron Girma from EPHI-NIPN presented the progress analysis of NNP II indicators

which was done by the NIPN on request by the MOH for use in development of the FNS. These findings were presented to the MOH and described in the June 2020 NIPN newsletter.

Dr. Meron observed that several gaps remain for the NNP II to reach its targets, including stunting and very slow progress in child diets. She stressed the scarcity of data for adolescent nutrition and the importance for the FNS to address adolescent nutrition, overweight and obesity and double duty actions to target both under and over nutrition.

She recommended, among others, inclusion of additional nutrition indicators in the DHIS2 and for nationally representative surveys to include non-communicable disease (NCD) and diet-related indicators.

Dr. Aregash Samuel provided updates of NIPN's interventions including *(Continue to P6)*

## Message from the Coordinator



Aregash Samuel (PhD)  
Deputy Director of FSNRD  
and NIPN Coordinator



**Enkutatash!**  
**(Happy Ethiopian New Year 2013!)**

Warm greetings to you all!

One of the unique national and cultural events in Ethiopia is the Ethiopian New Year celebration on 11 September. Ethiopians have their own calendar and the 11<sup>th</sup> of September marks the first day of 2013. It also marks the end of the rainy season and announces sunny and bright days ahead.

As the New Year fills the heart with great hope and enthusiasm, the NIPN team wishes all partners a happy Ethiopian New Year.

Despite the continuing challenges and restrictions brought about by COVID-19, the NIPN team continued to work hard to deliver on key activities and commitments during the last quarter. The NIPN supported EPHI to host a very successful virtual meeting/webinar with the members of the national Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee (MER SC) on August 25, 2020.

The team continued the analysis of data to respond to two policy questions and to finalize the reports and policy briefs.

The NIPN team was invited by Capacity for Nutrition (C4N), the global NIPN management agency, to share its experience on the policy question formulation process to NIPN implementing countries as well as how it ensures quality of its data analysis and research outputs. These presentations were good opportunities to promote the NIPN Ethiopia's team effort to other countries.

The NIPN, together with the Food Security Portal project co-organized a virtual research and policy seminar on "COVID-19 and its impacts on childhood malnutrition and nutrition-related mortality". This event was well attended and panelists discussed policy and program implications for Ethiopia.

The NIPN website and social media accounts are regularly

updated with contents and information, including the interactive NIPN dashboard.

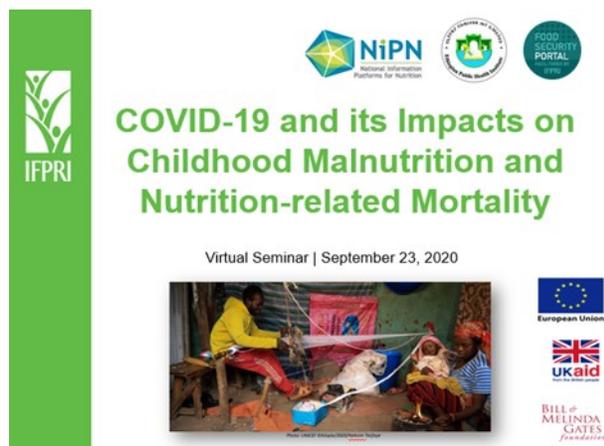
The main focus of the NIPN in the next quarter will be finalizing two reports for the policy questions and developing respective policy briefs, completing the data mapping report and sustainability plan, conducting training in communicating with policy makers and advanced Geographic Information Systems (GIS), organizing three virtual NIPN nutrition policy and research seminars, hosting a meeting with the NIPN Advisory committee (AC) and planning its interventions for the next 18 months.

I wish you a Happy Ethiopian New Year.

May the New Year be a safer year with hope and prosperity to all of us!

*"The main focus of the NIPN in the next quarter will be finalizing two reports for the policy questions and developing respective policy briefs, completing the data mapping report and sustainability plan.."*

## NIPN Webinar: COVID-19 is Increasing Child Wasting in Ethiopia and Around the World



The COVID-19 pandemic poses grave risks to the nutritional status and survival of young children in low- and middle-income countries, due in part to steep declines in household incomes, changes in the availability and affordability of nutritious foods, and interruptions to health, nutrition, and social protection services.

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) conducted recent analysis on economic shocks and child wasting showing a disturbing increase in the prevalence of moderate or severe wasting among children younger than 5 years due to COVID-19-related losses in gross national income per capita.

To consider the implications of this analysis for Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), IFPRI, the Ethiopia National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) and the Food Security Portal (FSP) Project co-hosted a webinar on **“COVID-19 and its impacts on childhood malnutrition and nutrition related mortality”** on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. The webinar brought together 88 participants from different sectors, including policymakers, academia, development partners and NGOs, to discuss the evidence and policy implications for Ethiopia.

Dr. Derek Headey, IFPRI Senior Research Fellow, presented IFPRI’s analysis on economic shocks and child wasting and included a modeling for Ethiopia. This has the potential to guide decision-making processes during the finalization of the Food and Nutrition Strategy and the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation actions in Ethiopia. IFPRI analysis showed that COVID-19 would increase the number of wasted children (low weight-for-height) by 6.7 million compared to a 2020 without COVID-19, while Ethiopia could see an increase of 134,000 moderately or severely

wasted children relative to what was expected before COVID-19. The projections are based on a global model and do not include country specific shocks such as the desert locust invasion or seasonal floods in Ethiopia, which would drive up this estimate. It will be critical to protect children with nutrition-sensitive social protection at an unprecedented scale, to prevent and treat severe acute malnutrition and to continue safe maternal and child health care services.

The presentation was followed by perspectives from two panelists, Dr. Sisay Sinamo, Senior Program Manager of the Sequota Declaration from the Ministry of Health and Dr. Stanley Chitekwe, Chief Nutrition Officer at UNICEF. Both panelists provided their remarks on the relevance of the findings for Ethiopia, and how the analysis is an advocacy tool with important policy implications. The session ended with a lively question and answer session.

The speaker and panelists identified key questions and evidence gaps that remain and stressed the importance of monitoring and evaluation during this COVID-19 crisis. While this is difficult for many governments and NGOs to do in the short run, phone surveys can help to track the impacts of the crisis. This renewed demand for additional information and evidence will support the research agenda of the Government of Ethiopia, NIPN and the National Nutrition Program Monitoring Evaluation and Research Steering Committee.

The NIPN is a multisectoral initiative funded by the European Union, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It promotes evidence-based decision making for nutrition and supports the implementation of the National Food and Nutrition Policy. The FSP is facilitated by IFPRI and is funded by the European Commission. The portal pools information in structured ways and ensure data quality, timeliness, and relevance. Both platforms provide opportunities for collaboration among policymakers, development professionals and researchers.

To access the webinar recording and presentation, please visit the NIPN website or click [here](#).

# Using the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coverage Standards to Assess Progress in WASH Practices in Ethiopia: A NIPN Analysis

Contributed by Meron Girma (PhD)

Access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation, and hygiene are crucial for optimal health and sustainable development. The importance of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) for health and development is highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation” aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

This goal plans to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all (including ending open defecation) by 2030.

The benefits of access to high-quality WASH facilities are numerous; improved WASH is linked with a reduction in diarrhea, soil-transmitted helminthic infection, trachoma, and an improvement in child nutritional outcomes. Furthermore, the provision of improved WASH services in schools can improve school attendance and academic performance by reducing days lost due to illness or due to girls staying home during their menses.

In the past two decades, the Ethiopian government has given special attention to ensuring the population has access to safe water and

improved sanitation facilities. The national ONE WASH program which aims to achieve universal access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services to all people in Ethiopia, was launched in 2013 and renewed in 2016. Furthermore, WASH indicators are one of the widely assessed nutrition-sensitive intervention indicators in the health sector.

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) has been monitoring progress in WASH and setting standards since 1990. In 2017, the JMP introduced new standards for assessing WASH services by expanding on previous standards, it set higher “service ladders” for WASH. These ladders go beyond the use of an improved water source and place additional emphasis on the time taken to collect water, availability of water when needed, and absence of fecal and priority chemical contamination. For sanitation facilities, the new standards recommend that in addition to using improved toilet facilities, excreta should be safely disposed of in situ or transported and treated off-site.

The new JMP recommendations also emphasize the use of basic hygiene facilities; which are *hygiene facilities with soap and water on the premise*.

To meet its goal of supporting evidence-based decision making, the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) is continually formulating policy-relevant questions.

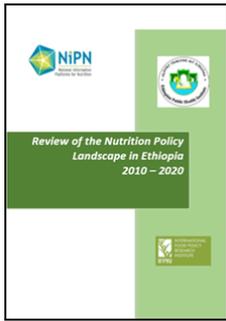
The first round of questions NIPN is working on were identified through a process that included a review of existing evidence, consultation with stakeholders, and validation by the NIPN Advisory Committee.

One of these questions is an analysis of progress in the coverage of WASH practices and the relationship of these changes with the decline in stunting and diarrhea among children aged 0-59 months.

To answer this question, the NIPN team is analyzing data from the four rounds of the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey and using the new JMP WASH standards to evaluate progress in WASH. As these new standards are not used widely, the analysis will produce new insights, including regional differences in WASH coverage and identifying WASH components that need more attention in future national programs.

## Sources

- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization. Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities. New York United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization; 2019.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. One WASH National Program (OWNP): A Multi-Sectoral SWAP. Addis Ababa.2013.



## Review of the Nutrition Policy Landscape in Ethiopia (2010 – 2020)

During the first half of 2020, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) collaborated with the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) to conduct a review of the nutrition policy landscape in Ethiopia. Findings of the review were presented virtually to staff from EPHI, the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) and the Food Science and Nutrition Research Directorate (FSNRD) in July and to the members of the National Nutrition Program (NNP) Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Steering Committee during a virtual webinar in August 2020.

While Ethiopia’s greatest nutrition challenge in recent years has been a high burden of undernutrition, overweight and obesity rates are increasing, particularly in urban areas. Ethiopia has a rich nutrition policy landscape, with the second NNP 2016–2020 and the National Food and Nutrition Policy 2018, playing a central role in addressing multiple nutrition issues. However, despite a broadened focus and multisectoral involvement, policy outputs still seem to focus more on undernutrition than on all forms of malnutrition.

As part of the NIPN’s work and to better understand the nutrition policy landscape in the country, this review assessed the integration of nutrition in Ethiopian policy outputs (i.e., policies, strategies, action plans, programs, and legal documents) using four dimensions of policy integration: framing, sector involvement, goal setting, and policy instruments. It also documented the use of evidence in policy making to help researchers better intervene and influence the policy processes.

Policy outputs were searched online using Google Scholar and Scopus, websites of government ministries and institutions, development partners and nongovernmental organizations. Sixteen government ministries and institutions were contacted for interviews.

The search resulted in 131 policy documents of which 73 met the inclusion criteria (publication date from 2010, endorsed by at least one NNP signatory ministry, food or nutrition as part of objectives, actions or recommendations). A content analysis was conducted of all the documents. Using an *a priori* code list and an inductive approach, goals, instruments and evidence were coded, and policy instruments were categorized as informational, legal, financial or organizational. See Figure 1.

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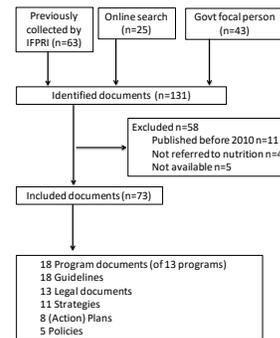


Figure 1 Overview of included documents

The review found that most of the outputs were from the health sector (17), followed by multisectoral outputs (10) issued by the Federal Government and the Ministry of Agriculture (8). The findings revealed that framing of nutrition in policy documents emphasized undernutrition and diets. Only three objectives referred to breastfeeding or hunger and few sectors framed nutrition in terms of all forms of malnutrition. Most objectives addressed infants and children under 5 years, but only few included women of reproductive age or adolescents.

All relevant sectors were involved in the development of nutrition policies in Ethiopia, but only health, agriculture, and education have formulated nutrition objectives in their sector-specific policies. Objectives related to determinants of malnutrition such as food production were primarily aimed to increase productivity and commercialization. While ‘improving food safety’ was a common objective in documents issued by the health sector; ‘food processing, labeling, and marketing’ were mentioned only in a few objectives. Objectives related to gender norms were rare.

Educational instruments in the policy documents were mostly related to provision of information: nutrition education and social behavior change communication to the general population, trainings and capacity building for health or agriculture extension workers or teachers. (Continue to P7)

## The Guideline for Rapid Literature Reviews is Now Available

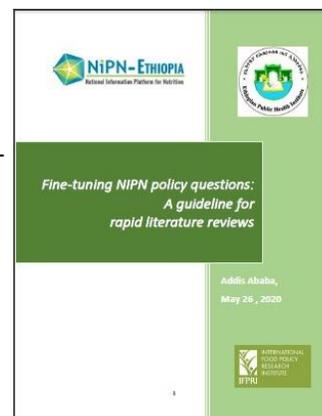
In May 2020, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) finalized a guideline for existing and future researchers on how to conduct a rapid literature review.

This guideline emanated from work that was done by the NIPN during the process to identify, formulate and respond to nutrition research policy questions. While responses to many policy questions will be based on analysis of existing data, a rapid literature review will help to refine the policy questions and provide useful global evidence to guide the national analysis.

In addition, some of the policy questions can be answered by synthesizing existing evidence through a rapid literature review. To support this process, EPHI's partner for NIPN, the IFPRI, has developed a guideline which provides the NIPN

team with the necessary steps to take to complete a rapid literature review.

It considers lessons learned during the “learning by doing research project” implemented under NIPN in 2018 and is inspired by various other learning events at EPHI. To demonstrate how some of this guidance can be implemented, the guideline also uses sample questions from the 2019 policy question formulation process.



For more information, please download the guideline from the NIPN website - <http://www.nipn.ephigov.et/resources>.

**You can also find the NIPN comprehensive communication strategy by clicking this link— <http://www.nipn.ephigov.et/other-resources>**

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## Overview of the MER SC Meeting ... Continued from P1

NIPN's response to policy questions from the MOH and analysis for two policy questions identified during the policy question formulation process; presenting in several global NIPN webinars, outreach events and launch of its website with interactive NIPN dashboards and of its social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter). She also presented the challenges NIPN faced and planned interventions through the end of the year.

Andinet Abera presented the FNG analysis bulletin. Since its launch by EPHI in May 2020, the National Technical Working Group on Cost and Affordability of Sustainable Healthy Diets works to deliver regular bulletins on the cost and non-affordability of healthy diets, to craft high-level advocacy messages and provide technical guidance on effective diet-based interventions across the food system.

The EPHI team was trained in the FNG analysis methods and are producing data for the bulletins. Key to note is that only 1/4 of Ethiopians can afford a nutritious diet and adolescent girls and pregnant/lactating women are at highest risk.

Important to note is that only 1/4 of Ethiopians can afford a nutritious diet, in addition adolescent girls and pregnant/lactating women are at highest risk.

Ursula Trübswasser, an IFPRI collaborator, presented the findings from a review conducted on the Nutrition Policy Landscape in Ethiopia from 2010 – 2020. Interesting findings were documented with strong recommendations. For more information about the policy review please see the article on page 5.

The meeting ended with an interactive questions and answer session. MER SC were also reminded to share any policy questions to the NIPN for further consideration.

For more information on the MER SC and presentations, please consult the [NIPN website](http://www.nipn.ephigov.et) or click [here](#).

## NIPN Ethiopia Shares Best Practices with NIPN Countries Around the World

The NIPN is currently implemented in nine countries and is funded by the European Union, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Global support to the NIPN is managed by Capacity for Nutrition (C4N) which is part of the Knowledge for Nutrition Program of the German government. C4N is implemented by the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit.

As part of C4N's support to NIPN countries, it organizes virtual meetings to discuss common thematic and programmatic topics and to stimulate cross-country learning. During the last quarter, C4N requested the Ethiopia NIPN twice to share best practices with all other NIPN countries on two topics: the NIPN Ethiopia's experiences during the policy formulation process (PQF) and best practices in assuring data quality outputs (including data analysis and reporting).

During the C4N webinar on 26 August 2020, the Ethiopia NIPN team presented the PQF process and steps of the PQF. The second topic was presented on 23 of September 2020. The team shared steps taken to maintain quality data to produce high quality outputs. Key steps include to integrate 'owners' of datasets in processes;

having a shared folder to share analysis on an ongoing basis and to cross check results for quality; engaging with experts to draw upon their knowledge; documenting processes along the way; and employing extensive review processes for quality reports and outputs. NIPN Ethiopia's technical support partner, IFPRI, provides trainings to NIPN staff and partners and on-the-job support to the NIPN team for data analysis, research reports and development of policy briefs.

The NIPN in Ethiopia values the encouragements by C4N for its achievements and learning. It equally benefits from the experiences from other NIPN countries. Over the years, the NIPN countries have established a true 'community of practice' where countries learn from one another, share tools and best practices and, equally important, learn from each other's mistakes.



## Review of the Nutrition Policy Landscape ... *Continued from P5*

Legal instruments primarily aimed at protecting breastfeeding, ensuring food safety, and promoting food fortification. Policy documents called for the enforcement of these instruments and proposed potential new regulations to encourage consumption of healthy food and discourage consumption of unhealthy food. Organizational instruments were mostly focused on improving existing institutions, mechanisms, and services, although the establishment of new coordination structures for multisectoral and vertical coordination was suggested.

Financial instruments ranged from access to financial support, direct support with cash through social protection programs, feeding programs, micronutrient supplements, and agricultural inputs. Taxes on unhealthy foods and drinks have been partially put in place.

In conclusion, there seems to be a good mix of policy instruments in Ethiopia.

However, most legal documents only address food safety, fortification, and infant feeding. Educational instruments predominate and while they address different forms of malnutrition, it often is proposed in isolation and not as part of joint interventions.

Evidence seems to have played an important role in informing and developing the reviewed policies. As the example of nutrition-sensitive agriculture showed, new global and Ethiopia-specific evidence created a momentum that might have led to the development of more nutrition-sensitive programs and strategies. Generation of new evidence or synthesis of existing evidence in areas that have not yet been fully addressed in policies could therefore help get these issues on the policy agenda.

## Interesting Research Articles from Ethiopia

**Ethiopia's agrifood system: Past trends, present challenges, and future scenarios** – edited by Paul Dorosh and Bart Minten - <https://ebrary.ifpri.org/digital/collection/p15738coll2/id/133982>

Ethiopia has experienced impressive agricultural growth and poverty reduction, stemming in part from substantial public investments in agriculture. Yet, the agriculture sector now faces increasing land and water constraints along with other challenges to growth. Ethiopia's Agrifood System: Past Trends, Present Challenges, and Future Scenarios presents a forward-looking analysis of Ethiopia's agrifood system in the context of a rapidly changing economy.

**Economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in Ethiopia: A review of phone survey evidence** – Kalle Hirvonen - <https://ebrary.ifpri.org/digital/collection/p15738coll2/id/133947>

The paucity of timely economic data in Ethiopia makes it difficult to understand the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate this, phone surveys are used to gather more information about the crisis. This research report reviews the available phone survey evidence as of mid-August 2020 and identifies knowledge gaps. 1) Evidence suggest that the pandemic has not led to unusually large increases in food prices. However, a case study in the vegetable sector suggests that price dynamics are highly context and crop specific, calling for more comprehensive price monitoring to identify food value chains and areas where food price increases may have been unusually rapid. 2) Employment losses have concentrated on informal sector workers while redundancies in the formal sector have been less significant. 3) There is considerable uncertainty about the income, poverty, and food security implications of this crisis. While most households report income losses, the qualitative and subjective nature of these questions mean that the magnitudes of these losses are unknown.

**Evaluation of Linear Growth at Higher Altitudes** – Kaleab Baye, Kalle Hirvonen - <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2769778>

The new study suggests a significant and under-appreciated additional factor in stunting: Altitude. The findings of this study suggest that residing at a higher altitude may be associated with child growth slowing even for children living in ideal home environments. Interventions addressing altitude-mediated growth restrictions during pregnancy and early childhood should be identified and implemented.

**Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women of Reproductive Age (MDD-W) Data Collection: Validity of the List-Based and Open Recall Methods as Compared to Weighed Food Record** - Giles T. Hanley-Cook, Ji Yen A. Tung, Isabela F. Sattamini, Pamela A. Marinda, Kong Thong, Dilnesaw Zerfu, Patrick W. Kolsteren, Maria Antonia G. Tuzon, and Carl K. Lachat -

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7400839/>  
Minimum dietary diversity for women of reproductive age (MDD-W) was validated as a population-level proxy of micronutrient adequacy, with indicator data collection proposed as either list-based or open recall. No study has assessed the validity of these two non-quantitative proxy methods against weighed food records. The study provides statistical evidence for over reporting of both list-based and open recall methods for assessing prevalence of Minimum dietary diversity for women of reproductive age (MDD-W) or ordinal food group diversity score in women of reproductive age in low- and middle-income countries. Operationalizing MDD-W through qualitative recall methods should consider potential trade-offs between accuracy and simplicity.



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