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# INSTITUTIONAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS CONDUCIVE TO NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AND/OR DIRECT NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS

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## Introduction

Since the mid-2000s, a series of events have placed nutrition back on the agenda. First, the human consequences caused by malnutrition were at the front and centre during the 2005 crisis in the Sahel. In 2007–08, three key global crises (food, finances and oil) once again impacted diets and nutrition. These events, and the effective communication<sup>1</sup> on the efforts required to achieve the nutrition-related Millennium Development Goal have increased awareness and helped to mobilise around nutrition.

This has resulted in the development of a new generation of nutrition policies, strategies and action plans in the Sahel and West Africa.

One of the main features of these strategic frameworks is the aim of mobilising all sectors and actors needed to combat

malnutrition. For example, the guiding principles in Chad for the implementation of its policy are “strengthening multi-sector co-ordination and the coherence of interventions” and “integrating the fight against malnutrition into all development programmes”.

The institutional environment and partnerships play a significant role in the implementation of these strategic frameworks.

During the panel discussion on “the institutional business environment and partnerships conducive to nutrition-sensitive and/or direct nutrition interventions”, participants will share experiences from different countries in terms of the institutional environment and partnerships to draw lessons. This note provides a brief overview of the context relative to the panel’s discussion topic.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, communications in relation to the 2008 Lancet series - Maternal and Child Undernutrition.

## Institutional environment

### 1. National mobilisation and political engagement on nutrition

The levels of malnutrition as well as the human, social and economic consequences for the region justify the need for malnutrition to be a national priority. Niger is an example of such political engagement. With the “Nigeriens feeding Nigeriens” (3N) initiative, combating food and nutrition insecurity is a governmental priority and a major national project. It is also a social issue.

Various initiatives aim to achieve or maintain mobilisation and political engagement for nutrition in the region, including the actions of parliamentary networks in Burkina Faso, Chad and Ghana.

### 2. Multifaceted institutional arrangements for better political support for nutrition

There are, essentially, two major institutional anchorage models at the central level:

- A Sector-based ministerial anchorage (as in Burkina Faso, Liberia and Mali).  
→ Burkina Faso provides an example of the ministry of health piloting a multisector approach.

- Anchorage within the office of the president (Benin, Niger and Sierra Leone), the vice president (Gambia) or the prime minister (Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal).  
→ In The Gambia, for example, the National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) was established under the office of the vice-president (which is also the ministry of women’s affairs). The National Nutrition Council (chaired by the vice-president) co ordinates the sector-based ministries. The Nutrition Technical Advisory Committee is responsible for technical co ordination and is a multiactor platform.

At the decentralised level, the situation varies from one country to another. For example, management and co ordination is currently being decentralised in Chad. In Senegal, the decentralised system consists of regional executive offices responsible for monitoring community-based nutrition actions and coordination through regional committees chaired by regional governors. At more decentralised levels, there are departmental monitoring committees, local monitoring committees at the municipal level and local steering committees with community volunteers in villages and neighbourhoods that are ultimately responsible for implementation and scaling up.

### 3. Institutional business environment

In addition to general business-friendly conditions, the specifics of an institutional environment conducive to business in relation to safe and nutritious food and nutrition include:

- Co-ordination and information sharing platforms for the various actors and the existence of private sector networks, such as those promoted by the Scaling Up Nutrition movement to foster dialogue, highlight this promising investment sector and help the private sector contribute to good nutrition.
- The necessity of informing and stimulating consumer demand by way of, for example, media and communication campaigns such as the nutrition “caravans” in Chad, Côte d’Ivoire and Mali.
- Public agricultural policies that favour nutritious food value chains.
- Regulations that facilitate investments in food and nutrition-sensitive agriculture and in the food industry, such as lowering the tax base. Negotiations are currently underway in West Africa on detaxing premix for food fortification. This should encourage more businesses to fortify food.
- Adopting consumer protection laws such as regulations governing the marketing of breastmilk substitutes.
- Once a law is adopted, such as the law on vitamin A-fortified cooking oil in place in a number of countries, it is important to ensure that it is enforced, that its implementation is monitored and that foods/products are in compliance.
- Mobilising financial institutions or international partners to support investment by ensuring easy access to credit or guarantees and providing technical assistance for designing and monitoring projects.
- Conducting studies to determine achievements, the models that are sustainable and have the capacity to be scaled up and enable consumers to access nutritious food.

### Partnerships

The following are common types of partnerships between governments and the different actors in the region:

- United Nations agencies and institutional funding bodies, commonly referred to as “technical and financial partners”, often provide technical assistance and/or sources of funding.
- Research organisations and consultancy firms for research or evaluation programmes . In Togo, for example, the evaluation of a cash transfer pilot programme with a ‘Communication-for Behaviour Change’ component was entrusted to the IRD (Research Institute for Development).
- Operators to increase intervention coverage (through contracting NGOs, for example), as in Benin and Senegal.
- The food industry and sometimes private foundations, for fortifying foods, Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF), cereal formulae and nutritional supplements. For example, Nigeria’s federal government has just announced a partnership with the Aliko Dangote and Bill & Melinda Gates foundations and food industry actors to step up the fortification of food.
- Private-sector actors involved in agriculture or agriculture value chains that contribute to food and nutrition security. In Burkina Faso, PIDASAN (the sustainable agricultural intensification project for food and nutrition security) is an example of such a partnership. However, such partnerships between national governments and private actors are still too rare. Agricultural policies with more of a focus on food and nutrition security as well as a more favourable business climate are needed.

## QUESTIONS TO OPEN THE DEBATE



- In terms of an institutional environment, there is no single model that applies in all cases. Given the current situation in the region, what key factors must an institutional environment comprise to ensure strong and sustainable political mobilisation for nutrition?
- What incentives must the institutional and business environment offer to ensure dynamic public-private partnerships and the best use of their contribution to nutrition? What incentives could be promoted and scaled up in the region?