

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Netherlands Working Group on International Nutrition

Summary

This report, written by the management team of the NWGN, provides an overview of the activities conducted by NWGN in 2020 followed by a reflection and some recommendations for the NWGN in the next few years. Early 2020 the NWGN agreed on a [workplan](#) (also see Annex 1) and guides the reader through this document. COVID-19 had not only a major impact on food systems and the nutrition situation, it affected also the way NWGN had to operate. Despite this, we believe that the NWGN has achieved the majority of the activities set out in the workplan for 2020.

Introduction

During 2020, the NWGN continued to operate according to the introduced and agreed management structure in 2018. Ans Eilander (Unilever Foods Innovation Centre Wageningen) was elected as incoming co-chair in December 2019, succeeding Annegré de Roos (Save the Children), and Herbert Smorenburg (Partnering with Purpose) continued as other co-chair. The secretariat of NWGN moved from GAIN to UNICEF NL for the next two years (2020 & 2021) and Marjolijn van Leeuwen joined the management team. For each activity one of the co-chairs took responsibility and led the subgroup of NWGN members that executed that activity. In this way the work plan was workable though sometimes challenging in timing and workload, especially due to the COVID-19 situation and related implications.

Communication strategy

Based on the feedback and reflections of 2019, described in the annual report 2019, we developed, agreed and implemented an internal and external communication strategy. The internal communication strategy included better informing NWGN members on the mission, vision, objectives, activities and results of the NWGN. This resulted in a review of our vision, mission and objectives sections in our statutes which resulted into three main objectives:

1. Nutrition intervention and targets remain on the agenda in policies and strategies of Dutch stakeholders, including governments, businesses, knowledge institutes and NGOs.
2. The nutrition related efforts of the members of the NWGN are strengthened and collaboration between government, civil society, knowledge institutes and private sector is stimulated.
3. The NWGN is recognized as a focal point within the Netherlands for nutrition issues in the international context.

The NWGN 2020 activities as described in the workplan are all contributing to at least one of these three objectives.

The internal communication strategy also aimed to optimize internal working processes to improve cooperation. Thereto internal email procedures were adapted and the use of the shared drive was further promoted. We started to share information via an internal NWGN newsletter (three issues were sent out in 2020).

Knowledge and information exchange

Led by Ans Eilander, and sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, the NWGN organised a side-event at the Micronutrient Forum (MNF) with the theme: “Are Public-Private Partnerships a must for accelerating the food system transformation, improving nutrition, livelihoods and climate adaptation?” Initially planned as a “regular” face-to-face conference in March, the MNF was postponed till Nov 2020 and eventually took place as an online conference. Three NWGN members, Heleen Bos (Rijk Zwaan), Sofia Condes (GAIN) and Fokko Wientjes (DSM) presented on their experiences

with working in PPPs. This was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Inge Brouwer (WUR). The presentations and panel discussion are available via the [MNF conference website](#) (search for NWGN).

In preparation of the Nutrition For Growth (N4G) and Food Systems Summit (FSS), both scheduled for end 2021, the NWGN agreed to include two major learning activities in its 2020 workplan. One activity is focused on collecting, organising and analysing information and experiences on approaches of Dutch local (municipal) governments in combatting youth obesity from a whole-systems perspective. The other activity is focused on a systematic evaluation of the Dutch experiences and lessons learnt in working in PPPs that are specifically aimed at addressing nutrition security. Both activities started in 2020 and will continue in 2021. The outcomes of both activities will be used by the NWGN and its members in the preparations of the N4G and the Food Systems Summit.

To promote knowledge exchange amongst NWGN member organisations, three dedicated 1.5 hour online sessions were organised covering the following topics: Nutrition and COVID-19, Workforce Nutrition, and Vegetable Value Chains. These sessions were recorded and presentations and recordings are available on the NWGN shared drive for further sharing but *only within NWGN* member organisations. All three sessions were well attended and it is recommended to continue with this knowledge exchange initiative.

Technical advice

The NWGN has worked on providing more detailed guidance to practitioners in the development sector (e.g. project partners working on agricultural value chain projects) on the use of indicators and their methodologies to measure the outcome indicators of nutrition security in the [Food and Nutrition Security Framework of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs](#). A narrative has been created with information on the different indicators and a decision tree was developed as practical guidance for users to select appropriate outcomes to evaluate their projects. This activity will continue with a dissemination process to inform users and explain the outcome indicator methodologies. For the work plan 2021 we suggest to include this guidance in the “external knowledge exchange” sessions.

The work on indicators has been used in providing guidance on intervention strategies and indicators towards nutrition sensitive approaches to project partners of the SDGP facility of NE-Agency. The main guidance document has been updated on [the NWGN website](#) and webinars have been hosted. Until May 2021 members of the NWGN will be available to the project partners to provide further guidance.

Lobby and advocacy

With regard to our activities on lobby and advocacy, we have provided joint feedback on two draft versions of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition in the first half of 2020. Upon request of the Food & Knowledge Business Platform, one of our members wrote [a blog](#) on the Global Nutrition Report 2020 which focused on inequalities.

As follow up of [the NWGN recommendations for the Dutch Food and Nutrition Policy](#), the NWGN discussed these with the Inclusive Green Growth department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conclusions of the NWGN chairs were that the NWGN’s holistic view and broad perspective was appreciated and in general accepted and supported, but that the NWGN is expected to zoom in to a level of concrete advice that can be implemented in practice. It was also concluded that it would be helpful to discuss certain recommendations, elaborated to a concrete level, with a larger audience (e.g. including relevant personnel of Dutch embassies). During the year some recommendations have been elaborated (PPP evaluation N4G, indicators results framework, knowledge exchange sessions Workforce nutrition & Vegetables). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed the NWGN that they have taken these recommendations in consideration in reviewing their nutrition policy and that they will consult the NWGN when a final draft is ready for circulation. Other recommendations such as the integration and consistency with Dutch (and European) food-, trade-, agriculture-, environment require a longer effort, starting with engagement of the Ministries of Agriculture and Health.

Strengthen and stimulate collaboration

The NWGN was approached by Marieke de Ruyter de Wildt, founder and director of The New Fork (TNF) and we invited her to give a pitch “How can Blockchain Technology help to accelerating nutrition efforts?” at the April NWGN meeting. Since the first responses of the NWGN members to explore the potential of this technology were positive, TNF and NWGN proposed to follow-up with an ideation session and this was taken up as additional activity in the work plan. Unfortunately, when the proposal had been elaborated, it appeared in the end that there was insufficient interest amongst NWGN members and the session was cancelled and the activity was stopped.

Towards the end of 2020, we have had the opportunity to get connected with the Netherlands Food Partnership, which was founded earlier in 2020. We provided input with specific focus on nutrition on their Annual Plan 2021 and shared an overview of our activities with them.

New members

Because of continued discussions on the wish to have a better representation of the private sector in the NWGN on the one hand, and of concerns about conflict of interest on the other hand, the NWGN elaborated and agreed on Principles of Engagement. The content of the document is ready and will be uploaded on the NWGN website. The NWGN welcomed the following new members in 2020: AMREF Flying Doctors Netherlands, Rijk Zwaan and East-West Seed.

Finance

The NWGN has spent € 81.368 of the € 91.291 that was available as NWGN budget for 2020. The remaining € 9.923 will be allocated to the 2021 budget. We have attached the financial overview over 2020 in Annex 2, which was presented by Sabine de Jong (UNICEF Netherlands) during the NWGN meeting on 15 Dec 2020.

Reflection by the co-chairs

We look back on a year in which the COVID-19 pandemic has been undermining nutrition across the world, particularly in low-income and middle income countries (LMICs). Some of the strategies to respond to COVID-19—including physical distancing, school closures, trade restrictions, and country lockdowns—are impacting food systems by disrupting the production, transportation, and sale of nutritious, fresh, and affordable foods, forcing millions of families to rely on nutrient-poor alternatives. Also in the Netherlands, we have witnessed the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the immediate consequences on public health and impacts on our daily lives, it confirmed the necessity to pay more attention to good nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Various organisations and individuals called for more attention to nutrition, also in the Netherlands. In a recent review¹ the authors compare Dutch national government policies with international best practices and conclude that the Dutch government can do much more to improve food environments, making a healthy choice easier.

It strengthens our opinion that we as NWGN should not consider Food and Nutrition Security in LMICs in isolation from our own situation in the Netherlands. We are therefore pleased with the fact that we have started the work with external consultants on evaluating lessons learnt in the Netherlands on addressing nutrition issues in the Netherlands and worldwide. This allows us as the Netherlands not only to sharing these lessons internationally but it should also stimulate that the Netherlands learns from international best practices to improve the nutrition situation in the Netherlands.

¹ Djojosoeparto SK, Kamphuis CBM, and Poelman MP for the Food-EPI project team, the Netherlands; part of the JPI-HDHL Policy Evaluation Network. The Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI): Nederland. Evidence document summarizing national governmental policies affecting the food environment in the Netherlands. Utrecht, Utrecht University 2020. https://www.jpi-pen.eu/images/reports/20200904_Food-EPI_NL_FINAL.pdf-accessed 02-02-2021.

We look back at a for the NWGN successful year, with many activities being completed or initiated. An ambitious workplan, in which we as co-chairs have had a crucial role to ensure progress. Compared to other years, we have increasingly worked with consultants in order to be more effective and this enabled us to also start larger projects like the evaluation of lessons learnt as mentioned above.

We have welcomed three new members, including an NGO (Amref Flying Doctors) and two companies (East-West Seed and Rijk Zwaan), resulting in a better balance of the different sectors, in particular that of the private sector. However, we could benefit from links with other private sector like retailers (in particular AHOLD and SPAR have as Dutch retailers a large international footprint), Rabobank and possibly caterers.

We believe that the internal communication strategy has helped to improve the engagement of members and strengthen collaboration between them. It remains difficult to engage everyone in one of the activities of the work plan and there is certainly room for improvement. We recommend that the co-chairs will actively seek contact and discuss how members that have not been as active as they committed to, can contribute to the NWGN objectives. The implementation of the external communication strategy, which has been agreed in October 2020, will require significant attention of the NWGN and in particular of the co-chairs but is necessary to (re-)position NWGN from being focused on undernutrition in low income countries to a Dutch network of experts on nutrition issues in the international context.

5	Strengthen and stimulate nutrition related efforts and collaboration between different sectors and other organizations in the field of food and nutrition security.	<p>a. Quarterly update meetings with the Netherlands Food Partnership to stay informed, be aligned where necessary and potentially collaborate on activities.</p>	<p>Co-Chair involved in subgroup: Herbert. Members involved in subgroup: UNICEF (Leonie), Save the Children (Annegré)</p>																
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Annex 2 Financial Overview 2020

	Output	Activities	Budget	Comments
1	Collaborate together as members of the NWGN to achieve the NWGN's purposes as described in the statutes.	a. Conduct three face-to-face meetings in 2020.	€ 49.159	Management and secretariat costs
		b. Conduct (at least) three online meetings in 2020.		
		c. Agree on new members for the executive committee of the NWGN (if applicable).		
		d. Annual report 2019 written and where necessary adapted and agreed.		
		e. Create and agree on the NWGN workplan for 2020 and 2021 taking into account the lessons learned from 2019.		
		f. Establish new NWGN management structure for 2021 - 2022 (if applicable)		
		g. Sharpen mission and vision of the NWGN.	€ -	
		h. Reflect on development of the NWGN (balance of contribution by members, portfolio of memberships, collaboration with other organisations and platforms)	€ -	
		i. Develop a communication strategy	€ 888	Maintenance website
		j. Approach 4 companies that could potentially become new NWGN-members.	€ -	
2	Knowledge and information exchange: (co-) organise webinars, sessions at conferences, workshops and roundtables	a. Host a roundtable to discuss how Dutch city nutrition initiatives can be strengthened and leveraged with support of the NWGN community and its (international) stakeholders (follow up on activity with City of Amsterdam, VU and SUN)	€ 16.170	GAIN contributed EUR 10,000 extra
		b. Prepare for and organise a NWGN side-event at the Micronutrient Forum in Bangkok (event is postponed).	€ -	
		c. Promote internal knowledge exchange through the organisation of dedicated sessions at the F2F meetings.	€ -	
		d. Discuss and agree follow up actions for the NWGN recommendations on the Dutch Food and Nutrition Policy (2019 document) for us as NWGN, and with Dutch MFA.		
		e. Explore whether we should organise an event to launch the Global Nutrition Report 2020 in the Netherlands (linked to N4G-summit).	€ 2.178	Blog GNR Arine
3	Provide technical advice to (non-) members	a. Assist MoFA with results framework on nutrition security to the broader public (see http://www.osresultaten.nl/theme/food#ind_food_intake).	€ -	
		b. Follow-up on activity: assist NE-Agency with their 'Impact Accelerator' framework as part of the SDGP programme (RVO)	€ -	Subgroup led by PwP is directly contracted by RVO
4	Formulate and publicize joint views and positions, using Lobby & Advocacy or other special events on nutrition	a. Formulate and publicize joint views and positions when opportunities arise.	€ -	
		b. N4G summit 17+18 Dec: Evaluate whether there is an opportunity for NWGN (and if yes, prepare a strategy and plan of action)	€ 12.973	Co-finance from RVO EUR 10,000 and GAIN EUR 10,000
5	Strengthen and stimulate nutrition related efforts and collaboration between different sectors and other	a. Quarterly update meetings with the Netherlands Food Partnership to stay informed, be aligned where necessary and potentially collaborate on activities.	€ -	

	organizations in the field of food and nutrition security.			
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Total contracted		81.368
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Total available		91.291
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Remaining for 2021		9.923