

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Netherlands Working Group on International Nutrition

Introduction

In 2021, Leonie Barelds (UNICEF NL) succeeded Herbert Smorenburg (Partnering with Purpose / Choices Foundation) as incoming co-chair, while Ans Eilander (Unilever Foods Innovation Centre Wageningen) continued as other co-chair. Leonie was the only NWGN member who volunteered for the function of co-chair in December 2020 and all members approved her application. The secretariat of NWGN remained at UNICEF NL and Marjolijn van Leeuwen continued to lead the secretariat. The way of working for execution of the activities within the NWGN remained unchanged with one of the co-chairs taking the responsibility and leadership of the subgroup of NWGN members that executed that activity. Due to the COVID-19 situation and related implications, all 6 NWGN meetings and the subgroup meetings remained virtual.

Future funding and 5 year strategy

In 2021, the 5 year funding for the NWGN management and secretariat was ending, and therefore the co-chairs evaluated several options for future funding. By the end of 2021, new funding through the ministry of Foreign Affairs was secured, with GAIN hosting the secretariat from 2022-24. Confirmation on the possibility from UNICEF to host from 2024 and further to fulfil the new 5yr time period is still pending. Alongside this new funding period and in addition with a growing number of NWGN members and professional activities, the co-chairs felt that the mission, structure and way of working of NWGN needed to get more focus. Therefore, the co-chairs prepared for an evaluation of this 5yr funding period as well as a workshop in 2022 to build a new 5 year strategy. [New Foresight](#) was hired to lead the process and to conduct a formal evaluation.

Knowledge and information exchange

There were two knowledge exchange sessions organized for NWGN members including one on the Right to Grow program in May 2021 by Max Foundation and Save the Children; Right2Grow is a partnership focusing on empowering communities for better nutrition and includes different NWGN members. A second session was organized on Sustainable Diets by WUR-CDI and GAIN in October 2021. A third session will be held in Feb 2022 on the results and implications of the Food Systems Summit and Nutrition for Growth (N4G) conferences where ATNI, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GAIN and Micronutrient Forum will present.

Technical advice

Four activities were aimed to provide technical advice, all started in 2020 and were finalized in 2021. The first activity was 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](#). The work was [published](#) in 2021 with a practical guidance document and a narrative with rationale for selected nutrition indicators.

The second activity was the impact accelerator for RVO projects awarded with Sustainable Development Goals Partnership (SDGP) project subsidies for which in 2020 information on nutrition sensitive agriculture was provided through a series of webinars which were well attended. In 2021, the subgroup provided the information on a one to one consultancy basis to project owners and

created a [practitioners guide](#), but unfortunately (and despite efforts on knowledge sharing platform) interest was very low as the inclusion of nutrition in projects remained voluntary in these projects.

The third activity was the review on Dutch public private partnerships in food and nutrition security that was executed via expert interviews and literature review by the [Partnership Resource Centre](#) of Erasmus University Rotterdam. Preliminary results were presented by Ans Eilander in a UNFFS independent dialogue on multistakeholder partnerships with round table focused on nutrition which was organized by NFP. The review has been [published](#) on the website and subgroup members have agreed to develop a follow-up activity in 2022.

The fourth activity was on Urban Learnings where Voedingsjungle was asked to review the key elements, facilitating factors and barriers of implementing an integrated approach to tackling childhood overweight and obesity in Dutch municipalities. This was done through an extensive literature review and interviews with experts from cities following [the JOGG](#) approach as well as non JOGG municipalities. Addendum 1 in the report describes a first high level exploration of potential avenues for translating and adapting the Dutch findings to a wider context. Addendum 2 in the report presents the outcomes of an UNFSS independent dialogue the subgroup organized in June on the findings. The subgroup will follow up on further disseminating the [publication](#) in 2022.

Communication strategy

In 2021, the NWGN communication subgroup continued the implementation of the NWGN's internal and external communication strategy, which was developed in 2020.

Internal communication:

The NWGN newsletter was introduced in 2020 as a means to stimulate information exchange between all NWGN member organizations and to inform members on general international nutrition updates, such as new publications and relevant upcoming events. In 2021 we shared three newsletters.

In June 2021 we evaluated the newsletter during an NWGN-meeting. The feedback was predominantly positive with members responding that being updated on the work of other member organizations was valuable and that the occasional provision of short overviews of information, relevant to all NWGN-members, was useful.

2021 also showed that the collection of enough relevant input from members for each newsletter could be a challenge. For 2022 it would be good to reflect on this in the 5-year strategy plans.

External communication

In 2021, the NWGN started exploring how to expand the reach of NWGN-publications to a larger group of stakeholders in the field of international nutrition. One of the ways in which we tried to do so was by strengthening the link between the NWGN and the communications department of the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP), which has a large network of experts in the field of food and nutrition security. In 2021, we regularly met with NFP to discuss the NWGN's communications planning as well as NFP's planning. This resulted in three NWGN-reports ([NWGN Guidelines on Food and Nutrition Security Indicators](#); [NWGN Practitioner Guide for SDGP and other PPP projects](#); and [the evaluation report on Dutch Public-Private Partnerships](#)) being published on NFP's website and integrated in their newsletter.

Lobby and advocacy

In follow up of [the NWGN recommendations for the Dutch Food and Nutrition Policy](#), there were two actions for 2021. The first was for the co-chairs to discuss the recommendations with the ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS). The co-chairs had

two online meetings with LNV to introduce NWGN and identify opportunities to collaborate. In a meeting between JOGG and VWS we could shortly introduce our report on the Dutch learnings to tackling childhood overweight and obesity. The workgroup will follow up in 2022. The second action was to organize a series of webinars on nutrition which has been postponed to 2022 due to lack of resources.

In June, we prepared an advocacy activity aimed to ensure that policies of the new cabinet will include nutrition sensitive and specific interventions. The subgroup prepared a letter to the minister of Foreign Affairs to draw attention to the impact that COVID-19 has on the nutrition situation with a plea to invest more in nutrition in general and specifically during the IDA end of June and UNFSS in September and to better include nutrition indicators in programs focusing on food security.

Strengthen and stimulate nutrition related efforts and collaboration between different sectors and other organizations in the field of food and nutrition security

In 2021, NWGN continued the existing collaboration with NFP with quarterly meetings to exchange information on ongoing developments in the area of food and nutrition security (e.g. upcoming events and publications).

New members

In 2021 we welcomed the Max Foundation and the Yoba for Life Foundation.

Finance

In 2021 the NWGN spent a total of € 115.578,04.

Expenditures consisted of:

- Chair, secretariat, HR, Legal and Finance support
- PPP's research and related activities
- Food and Nutrition Security Indicators research and related activities
- Urban Learnings research and related activities
- NWGN website

The remaining budget (of € 48.310,88) will be used in 2022 for:

- Payment of costs for co-chair Leonie Barelds
- NWGN Strategy session
- Evaluation of NWGN
- NWGN activities to be decided on in 2022

Reflection by the co-chairs

The year 2021 was the year of two important international meetings, including the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September and Nutrition 4 Growth meeting in December. Towards the UNFSS, many side events, called independent UNFSS dialogues were organized. NWGN has participated in the dialogue on multistakeholder partnerships and organized an independent dialogue on urban systems approaches to combat childhood overweight and obesity. In both events, NWGN could leverage new knowledge that was gained through two large evaluations (PPP's in Nutrition and Urban learnings) that were initiated in 2020. In N4G, countries and other stakeholders could make commitments related to health, food and resilience. The government of the Netherlands made a financial commitment for both specific and sensitive nutrition interventions.

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to worsen the nutrition situation worldwide and has led to a significant increase in child malnutrition through declining household incomes, disruption of nutrition and health services, and reduced availability and affordability of healthy diets. As part of the advocacy activities, NWGN has therefore send a letter to our minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kaag to ask specifically for funding for nutrition in addition to other aid funds.

Also in the year 2021, NWGN continued to operate mostly online, which worked well. However, when restrictions ease we will look forward to in person meetings again.

Most of the activities on the NWGN workplan have been successfully delivered, with four new reports that were appreciated by stakeholders. The current way of working with subgroups that are led by a co-chair do work effectively but place a heavy workload on co-chairs. Outsourcing activities to external parties was a good strategy for NWGN to be able to perform large evaluations, but relies significantly on direction and expertise of NWGN itself in order to make outcomes useful for application in nutrition in the international context. Therefore, such activities should only be planned when there is also sufficient dedication from NWGN members.

Over the past years NWGN has grown substantially with two new organisations joining in 2021. The evaluation mid 2021, indicated that overall members were satisfied with the progress and output, also newer members were enthusiastic. However, participation in activities and meetings largely depend on interest and/or match with member organizations. On the one hand, there are members who are very knowledgeable and active in many activities whereas others are more silent mainly joining just the general meetings when possible and no other active participation over several years. While it did help to involve more members (other than the management) in the meetings and to ask more often for feedback and ideas, it did not help to make the silent members more active.

The observations of heavy workload on co-chairs, growing number of members and highly varying degrees of participation of the member organizations has led to the conclusion that NWGN will need a thorough evaluation of its mission, strategy and way of working in order to create more focus and to be more effective in the future. We believe that the workshop early 2022 together with a formal 5 year evaluation of NWGN by external stakeholders will be essential in supporting the NWGN to define its future and the 2022 workplan.

Annex 1 Progress against the NWGN workplan

This workplan was based on the NWGN objectives and agreed by the NWGN in the first meeting of the year and updated during the year. Our progress against the agreed activities is listed in the table below.

	Output	Activities	Subgroup members	2021													
				Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		
1.1	Collaborate together as members of the NWGN to achieve the NWGN's purposes as described in the statutes.	a. Conduct at least one face-to-face meeting in 2021. (depending on COVID-19).															
		b. Conduct (at least) five online meetings in 2021.		█		█		█			█	█		█			
		c. Agree on new members for the executive committee of the NWGN (if applicable).															█
		d. Annual report 2020 written and where necessary adapted and agreed.		█	█												
		e. Create and agree on the NWGN workplan for 2021 and 2022 taking into account the lessons learned from 2020.		█	█									█	█	█	
		f. Establish new NWGN management structure for 2022 – 2023 and secure budget for secretariat, chairs, and activities after 2021	GAIN (Mieke)														█
		g. Reflect on development of the NWGN (balance of contribution by members, portfolio of memberships, collaboration with other organisations and platforms)	Co-Chairs														
		h. Implement the communication strategy developed in 2020	Co-chair involved in subgroup: Ans Eilander Members involved in subgroup: Marjolijn (UNICEF), Mieke (GAIN), Annegré (Save the Children)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
1.2	Knowledge and information exchange: (co-) organise webinars, sessions at conferences,	a. Synthesize the learnings of Dutch municipal whole-system approaches in combatting youth obesity and provide a universal framework, applicable in an international context. Executed by Voedingsjungle	Co-Chair involved in subgroup: Leonie Barelds Members involved in subgroup: GAIN (Annemieke), VU (Coosje), WUR (Alida), UMCG (Regien), PWP (Herbert) (RUG (Hinke)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		

