



NUSAPPS

Nutrition, Food Security and Politic Policies in the Sahel



Inform for a better decision

Activities conducted between September 2007 and September 2008

PRESENTATION OF NUSAPPS

CONTEXT

The sahelian countries experienced record rates of chronic malnutrition for many years now. Chronic malnutrition is mostly translated into stunting among young children whose insecure nutritional state deteriorates at the slightest socio-economic, health or psychosocial disruption. Malnutrition rates, as expressed in stunting among children under 5, vary from 15% to 40% according to the countries in the CILSS zone.

In recent years, the sahelian economies have greatly evolved as a result of globalization, demographic pressure and climate change, which have resulted in modifying the causes and consequences of food vulnerability. These structural changes could not be correctly monitored because nutrition was not a priority in the development actions at the time. Therefore the rates of chronic malnutrition remained very high and the food situation of the populations, particularly the urban population, was not known.

In 2006, as a result of this lack of information and appropriate response to the problems of nutrition, CILSS, IRD and the French MFA decided to launch the initiative « Nutrition, Food Security and Public Policies in the Sahel (NUSAPPS) » in order to give the necessary support to the countries so as to help them develop their food security monitoring system and to take into account the nutritional situation. This initiative benefits from the CILSS experience in setting up the regional information network on food security, preceded by a capacity building program for the EWS (Early Warning System).

In the course of the year 2006 and at the beginning of the year 2007, exploratory missions were conducted in the 9 CILSS countries in order to evaluate the food information systems in each country and how the nutritional data were taken into account as regards to surveillance and early warning.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a technical support to the member countries to integrate nutritional information into the food security early warning, diagnosis and surveillance systems;
- Reinforce the capacities of the national senior and technical staff in nutrition and nutritional information ;
- Provide support to the countries for the evaluation of public policies, their evolution and their implementation;
- Adapt the information systems to the new regional challenges: food crisis, nutrition as a break in the development process, growth of the urban population....

ACTIVITIES

During the preliminary phase of the project, activities were concentrated in 4 countries :

- Burkina Faso
- Gambia
- Niger
- Senegal



Putting in place of the Nutrition pool in 3 countries : The Gambia, Niger and Senegal

In order to improve the national information systems on nutrition, the initiative started by supporting the constitution of multi disciplinary nutrition "pools" in three (3) countries (The Gambia, Niger and Senegal). This multi sectoral approach is essential as it reflects on the complexity of the nutrition issue.

The members of these pools are from the national structures involved in nutrition and food security: Nutrition/Ministry of Health, National Statistics, Food Security Unit, Early Warning Systems ...Partner institutions were also invited to support the national pool in its development and its actions (UNICEF, Fews Net, HKI...).

In October 2007, after a period of identification and putting in place of the Nutrition pool, a CILSS expert team organized training in each of the 3 countries to facilitate the launch of the first activity conducted by these pools. Following an exhaustive inventory of the existing in terms of collection of nutritional data, the national senior staff and technicians participating in the initiative conducted a causal analysis of malnutrition on the basis of data from the DHS and MICSS surveys that took place in the countries.

In February 2008, the 3 national Nutrition pools met in Dakar, Senegal and there they presented the results of their work and initiated a network.

The national Nutrition pools are involved in the experiences of integrating nutritional data into the national food surveillance system in Niger and in urban area in the Gambia. They also play an essential role in the dissemination of the information among services involved in nutritional information.

Development of tools for the collection of nutritional information into the information systems on Food security

A select number of indicators are used in the nutrition sector and several indicators are currently being validated : wasting/Kwashiorkor, underweight, stunting, MUAC, food diversity score, food insecurity scale, deficiencies in micro-nutrients. Some indicators are very restrictive in terms of collect and do not therefore make it possible to collect data on an annual basis. Researches have been carried out in past years to develop indicators that facilitate a more regular collection and which require less resources in order to set up routine information systems.

The initiative NUSAPPS, with the academic support from IRD, worked on this issue in order to participate in the validation of certain indicators and to make recommendations to the CILSS and ECOWAS member states. Partnerships have also been established (especially with FAO, DGPSA of Burkina Faso) and surveys conducted.

First of all, the indicators of the food diversity score and the food insecurity scale have been tested in the urban area by CILSS and IRD in Ouagadougou through three (3) surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008. These indicators had already been tested in the rural milieu within the framework of the FANTA project. The surveys on Food Vulnerability in the Urban Area in Ouagadougou allowed to determine that these indicators were significantly linked to the economic level of the household and to basic food characteristics. The indicators present unfavorable rates when the socio-economic and demographic situations are unfavorable. They therefore evolve in time and in coherence with the circumstances.

From March to September 2008, an intern from the University of Montpellier seconded to IRD and CILSS, carried out a study on the use of the MUAC for surveillance and early warning in the EPA in Burkina Faso, in collaboration with the DGPSA of Burkina Faso. This study showed the importance of working on long series of data and to ensure a regular collection in order to point out the seasonal and annual evolutions. This study has also revealed that the MUAC was an indicator that was easy to integrate into an agricultural survey, that it would follow the trends of the nutritional situation and could be used for surveillance purpose provided that the sampling be increased in order to facilitate an analysis at the regional level.



Identification of the causal factors of malnutrition

In addition to the analyses done in the Gambia, Niger and in Senegal by the national pools, a study was conducted by a CILSS INSAH team on the existing data in Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad.

All of these analyses have used MICS and DHS survey data according to their availabilities and the countries. The principal objective of these analyses was to point out the principal factors that influence the malnutrition of the children under 5 and to document them to support the development of appropriate and effective policies. During these analyses, various data quality problems were detected, which was a major difficulty in the course of the work. The main causes, of an individual, family and environmental / societal nature, were highlighted as well as the particularities of each country.

Pilot experiences in integrating nutritional data into the national systems

Following the exploratory missions which revealed the gaps in the collection of nutritional information in certain countries and in the validation of a certain number of indicators, the CILSS and IRD experts provided their technical support to the Gambia and to Niger for conducting pilot experiences as well as surveys carried out in Ouagadougou.

- Integration of nutritional data into the EPER in Niger - March to September 2008:

In March 2008 the preparatory work for the integration of food and nutritional data started (MUAC, food diversity score and food insecurity scale) in the permanent agricultural survey (EPER) in the region of Tillabéri in Niger. This pilot activity aims at evaluating the relevancy of such an integration and if proven, will extend the experience to other regions in 2009.

- Food Vulnerability Survey in Urban Area in Ouagadougou – July and December 2007, July 2008:

IRD and CILSS carried out three (3) VAMU surveys in Ouagadougou in July and December 2007 and in July 2008. This survey made it possible for the first time to address the situation of the urban population in Ouagadougou. The cross-analysis of the surveys of July 2007 and July 2008 made it possible to point out the impact of the price rise on the population. These surveys also made it possible to target the most vulnerable groups in Ouagadougou in order to put in place a humanitarian aid program.

- Survey on Food Vulnerability in Urban Milieu in Banjul - April to September 2008:

NaNA has conducted a VAMU survey in Banjul in June 2008, using the methodology validated during the VAMU surveys in Ouagadougou in 2007. This survey made it possible for the first time to highlight the situation of the urban populations in the Gambia.

Setting up a network and disseminating the information

In order to facilitate the networking among countries and the dissemination of information on tools and experiences in nutrition surveillance, various communication tools were developed:

- An information page has been put in place on the CILSS internet site so as to disseminate information on these indicators and the validation exercises as well as on the regional and national activities of the initiative : www.cilss.bf/nusapps

- A quarterly newsletter is published, targeting partners, donors and the agencies interested in nutrition information in West Africa.

Strategic activities on Public Policies

The enumeration by country of the public policy texts and documents related to poverty/food security/nutrition (strategic documents on Poverty Reduction, Contingency Planning of the National System on Prevention and Management of Food Crises, National Action Plan for Nutrition, Strategic Frameworks for Food Security...) is underway with the help of the pools of experts and partners.



The analysis of these documents for a first group of three (3) countries will start at the end of the year 2008 and should allow to have an overall vision of the plans of action of the Governments in the sectors of nutrition and food security. An evaluation of their implementation is also planned so as to influence on the improvement of public policies on nutrition in the sub-region.

PROSPECTS FOR 2008-2009

The preliminary phase pointed out a certain number of strengths and weaknesses in the initiative. The plan of action for 2008-2009 reflects therefore the adaptations and evolutions necessary in the improvement of the process mainly:

- Increased support to the countries :

Training on nutritional surveillance and its tools in December 2008, targeting the senior staff and technicians of the EWS and Nutrition services in the CILSS and ECOWAS countries;
Technical support to the countries to develop their action plan and their projects designed to improve nutritional information;
Development and dissemination of thematic files: indicators, collect methodologies etc;
Technical and financial support to the countries to integrate nutrition information in their national surveillance systems;
Institutionalization and perpetuation of the VAMU surveys in Burkina Faso and in the Gambia;
Expanding the collect of nutritional information through the EPER in Niger;
Preparing a VAMU survey in Nouakchott in Mauritania.

- Improved visibility of the activities and better communication :

Publication of the results of the studies and the surveys;
Participation of the countries and the initiative in regional and international forums;
Diffusion of the newsletter and regular update of the website;

PREPARATION OF AN ACTION PLAN FOR 2009 - 2011

During this first phase and in order to improve durably the nutritional information, it appeared necessary to :

- Provide a strong support to the countries;
- Convince and act at all decision making levels and the programs and public policies implementing levels in order to «raise nutrition in the national agenda».

The NUSAPPS initiative has therefore prepared a more ambitious plan of action for 2009 -2011 that will allow the ECOWAS and CILSS countries to develop more effective systems of information on nutritional and food surveillance and therefore anticipate and respond to recurrent nutritional crises and develop public policies that are more adapted to reduce chronic malnutrition.

The NUSAPPS initiative in 2007 – 2008 in figures

4 countries receiving direct technical support
14 national staff and technicians trained in the use of the SPSS software and data analysis
12 regional and international experts involved
4 training sessions organized

The budget, excluding technical assistance, for 2007 -2008 amounts to 150 000 Euros and is financed by the French Cooperation, the European Union and IRD.

