



REPORT

TOGETHER *for* NUTRITION

West African Data Forum

11-12 FEBRUARY 2020
SALY, SENEGAL

Summary

[Transform Nutrition West Africa](#), led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and its partners, UNICEF, DataDENT, Countdown to 2030, CDC, USAID, WHO, WAHO, and NIPN, co-convened the [Together for Nutrition: West African Data Forum](#) to: *i)* share national and regional achievements and challenges in operationalizing the data value chain for nutrition; *ii)* strengthen connectivity, coordination, and collaboration on data-driven nutrition action; *iii)* formulate a call to action to strengthen the data value chain for nutrition at country and regional level; and *iv)* identify stakeholder groups to take up and support the call to action.

Through a mix of plenary and breakout sessions that included panels, discussions, training exercises and visual notetaking, we took stock of the data value chain for nutrition in the West African region. Over the course of the two days, we learned about country and regional experiences related to each step of the nutrition data value chain from participating researchers, policymakers, implementing partners, donors, and international agencies. There was ample time for networking including structured activities that facilitated interaction between participants. Finally, on the last day of the Forum, participant breakout groups refined the various calls to action and synthesized lessons learnt for each stage of the nutrition data value chain. As part of these efforts, participants identified promising practices and the type of support required to implement the recommended actions in their context.





Outcomes

By the end of the two days, Data Forum participants:

1. Had a better understanding of the data value chain concept and ways to apply it to assess and inform actions in their context.
2. Were aware of experiences, tools, and other resources from West African and global contexts relevant to each step of the data value chain.
3. Built a stronger network of regional colleagues and institutions for sharing resources and ongoing experiences.
4. Shared specific successes and challenges from their context and, informed by larger group discussions, identified 1-3 action points around assessment and strengthening of the nutrition data value chain in their countries or regional institutions.
5. Contributed to a common call to action for strengthening the nutrition data value chain at country and regional level. A primary audience for the call to action includes donors and technical agencies that will support these coordinated efforts.

Session summaries

Opening session

Speakers: Stuart Gillespie, Ellen Piwoz, and Roos Verstraeten

Stuart Gillespie, the director of Transform Nutrition West Africa, introduced the forum, its objectives and expected outputs, the organizing partners, and the concept of the data value chain and its various stages. The *Keynote Address* given by **Ellen Piwoz** from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation framed the objectives of the Data Forum around the data value chain and introduced global examples for each stage. In her concluding messages, Dr Piwoz quoted Kofi Annan “without data we are flying blind” which set the scene for the remainder of the Forum.

Session 1: Data Prioritization, Creation, and Collection

Speakers: Tomé Ca, Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey, Rebecca Heidkamp, Celine W Zongo, and Adelheid Onyango

Panel: Chitu Nelson, Kamil Shoretire, Dominic Elue, and Adeyinka Onabolu

Moderator: Namukolo Covic | Facilitators: Namoudou Keita and Kinglsey Kwadwo Pereko

A strong nutrition data value chain requires strategic efforts to identify and prioritize information needs and a comprehensive plan for data collection. During this session, which included both a plenary and a breakout group, we aimed to *i)* develop a common understanding of current efforts around prioritization, creation and collection of nutrition data across West Africa and at global level; *ii)* help participants reflect on how to more strategically approach data prioritization and collection in their contexts; and *iii)* identify available resources (e.g. country experiences, tools) as well as priority needs and action steps to strengthen the prioritization, creation and collection of data in West Africa.





Tomé Ca of the West African Health Organization (WAHO) served as the overall session facilitator. Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey of the University of Ghana presented an overview of the types of nutrition indicators being collected and large-scale data collection activities being carried out across the West Africa region. Guided by the UNICEF framework, he started with an overview, of the types of information needed for nutrition policy and program decision making. The most common data sources include HMIS/DHIS-2, surveillance systems and household surveys including annual SMART surveys in several countries. Data on diet-related chronic disease, intervention coverage beyond the health sector, as well as elderly and adolescent populations are lacking across countries. Rebecca Heidkamp from DataDENT/Johns Hopkins University highlighted global indicator frameworks as well as efforts to add new indicators to the DHS-8 household survey and provide guidance for nutrition indicators in DHIS-2 systems. Finally, a panel from Nigeria (Chitu Nelson from the Federal Ministry of Budget and Planning, Kamil Shoretire and Dominic Elue from the Federal Ministry of Health, and Adeyinka Onabolu from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture) described efforts to strengthen the country's nutrition data landscape including annual SMART surveys, new DHIS-2 indicators and an ongoing National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey.

During concurrent breakout sessions Adelheid Onyango of the WHO Regional office highlighted efforts in Ivory Coast to strengthen facility-level data on nutrition while Celine W Zongo described a pilot testing of nutrition indicators for the Burkina Faso HMIS which led to the adoption of a revised set of indicators. These sessions were followed by facilitated small group discussions about resources, priority needs, and action steps.

This enabled participants to *i)* describe nutrition data commonly collected across the West Africa region as well as unique indicators or data collection platforms used in specific contexts; *ii)* identify nutrition information gaps in their context and possible ways to address these gaps; and *iii)* reflect on how efforts in select countries to strengthen prioritization, creation, and collection of nutrition data could apply to their context.

Some of the key challenges and recommendations mentioned during the breakout session included:

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Indicators are not collected and reported in a standard way across partners or geographies- Countries do not find balance between the national health information system (routine data system) and the survey data- Lack of coordination between multisectoral actors in nutrition for data collection and reporting- Routine data systems are plagued by data quality issues including lack of registers/tools and low capacity to manage data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Development of a national information system that has indicators to feed to all sectors- Long-term investment in human and material resources for data collection and use- Digitalisation of data at all levels, including at community level for HMIS and using tablets for surveys- Piloting HMIS updates before scaling-up





Session 1 Key calls to actions

1. Develop and cost national data value chain plans
 - a. National plans should prioritize indicators that reflect national strategies across data collection channels to ensure a minimum set of data is available in a timely way, at the right level for key decisions; costing ensures it can be financed.
2. Countries must coordinate across sectors and partners to ensure more actionable indicators of intervention coverage and quality are available

Session 2: Data Curation and Analysis: Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities for Better Use of Data to Improve Nutrition Programs

Speakers: Barbara Baille, Chika Hayashi

Panel: Pascal Nakelse, Veronica A. Quartey, Kouame Oka Rene

Moderator: Safia Jiwani | Facilitators: Namoudou Keita and Kingsley Kwadwo Pereko

This session aimed at *i)* identifying current best practices, gaps and quality issues related to the curation and analysis of nutrition data, and *ii)* prioritizing future opportunities and collaborations to optimize this curation and analysis phase. It focused on the process of structuring and synthesizing data through an interactive session highlighting country experiences and opportunities to enhance the process. The following topics were covered: data curation process, including data processing, quality checks and data cleaning and entry; analytical tools and models; and data visualization for analytics.

Chika Hayashi, Senior Advisor Statistics and Monitoring in UNICEF-HQ, defined data curation and data analysis. She presented different options and guiding principles to store and organize the data to prepare them for analysis. She also presented good practices to analyze data and mentioned some of the existing initiatives that aim at sharing cleaned and processed nutrition-related data. The session shared country experiences from the West Africa region. Veronica Quartey, from the Ghana Health Service, described the modalities in place to collect and report on nutrition data in Ghana. She mentioned the regular control checks prior to data validation and throughout the data flow. She also cited the use of *Bottleneck Analysis* for Vitamin A in Ghana, which helped improve data quality and ultimately, programming. Kouame Oka René, from the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene in Ivory Coast, emphasized the need to improve use of data at the lowest levels, including among beneficiaries. Utilisation of data by primary collectors was key for improving data quality and programmes. He also highlighted the need for data systems to take into consideration the continuum of care. Pascal Nakelse, from the National Statistical Institute in Burkina Faso, described the national system to detect anomalies in data: the documented procedures in place, and a project currently being implemented to create a repository of national data to allow for cross analysis.

This session allowed participants to *i)* be aware of existing evidence, resources, and tools that can support data curation and analysis; *ii)* share personal experiences and learn from other participants to improve the nutrition data value chain; and *iii)* reflect on ways to address data curation and analysis gaps and prioritize future actions/recommendations.

Some of the key challenges, best practices and recommendations mentioned during the breakout session included:



Challenges	Best practices	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data accessibility - Staff capacity to analyze data, from lowest to highest level - Connectivity - High staff turnover - Accountability - Database interoperability - Existing parallel reporting systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multisectoral/actor consultation - Elaboration of metadata - Capacity building of human resources - Unique framework for data analysis - Sustainability of government funding - Statistics or data training included in the curriculum for health staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digitalization of data – use of new technology to collect and report data - Open data and centralization of databases to allow for cross-analysis, trends over time and between countries/programmes - On-the-job mentoring of primary health care staff as opposed to off-site ad-hoc trainings that send health staff away from their work for an entire week, and regular supervision - Performance-based financing of data systems

Session 2 Key calls to actions

1. Strengthen staff capacity to produce and use quality nutrition data, including primary health staff, using innovative methods such as:
 - a. on-the-job mentoring, as opposed to off-site and ad-hoc trainings;
 - b. inclusion of statistics in national health curriculum.
2. Improve access to data: adopt an open-data policy, which includes interoperability of data systems, to allow for cross-analysis and trends assessments over time and between programmes and countries.
3. Develop standardized procedures for data curation and analysis, among sectors and at every levels of data flow, for improved data interpretation and use.

Session 3: Translating and Disseminating Data

Speakers: Manisha Tharaney, Maurice Gerald Zafimanjaka, Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey, Cheikh Faye, Augustin Flory

Moderator: Roos Verstraeten | Facilitators: Tricia Aung and Youssouf Keita

Governments can improve their nutrition policies and programs by making better use of data. This involves translating and disseminating data at the right time to decision-makers who can act on it. During the plenary session, Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey, University of Ghana and Cheikh Faye, APHRC presented



some key principles and their experiences in engaging stakeholders in translating and disseminating data. They emphasized the importance of involving stakeholders from the onset, using workshops, boards and the media to evoke emotion and interest and demonstrate usefulness. Maurice Gerald Zafimanjaka, of Alive & Thrive, Burkina Faso, shared a case study that illustrated the successful application of national SMART (survey) data for a National Breastfeeding Campaign. Breastfeeding trends and area graphs on breastfeeding patterns were used to successfully bring together stakeholders around the importance of not providing water to infants less than six months.

Following the plenary session, Augustin Flory from R4D, provided an overview of data visualization. He highlighted the importance of testing visualization formats with target audiences and including actionable indicators that align with the data visualization's theory of change. This session was followed by a highly interactive session organized by Tricia Aung (Johns Hopkins) and Youssouf Keita (DataDENT) aimed at advancing participants' skills in effective visualization techniques for nutrition data.

This session allowed participants to: *i)* have a better understanding of common barriers to the effective use of data and how to overcome them; *ii)* increase their awareness of data visualization and other techniques that have been used to advocate for and monitor nutrition programs; and *iii)* have basic skills in using data visuals for monitoring, accountability and advocacy.

Session 3 Key calls to action

1. Stakeholder engagement:
 - a. Creating a space for conversation between academics, industry, donors, and government is key to advance data for nutrition
 - b. Building relationships, trust and creating shared value is a crucial step in engagement with stakeholders
2. Dissemination:
 - a. It is crucial to give the right message at the right time
 - b. The use of more traditional means (media engagement) for research dissemination such as TV, radio, and in local languages is recommended
 - c. Data visualisation is important to transfer research messages: testing visualization formats with target audiences and including actionable indicators that align with the data visualization's theory of change are key
 - d. Include actionable indicators if you want to spur action

Session 4: Data for decision-making across the data value chain

Speakers: Maria Jefferds, Rebecca Pradeilles, Saadou Bakoye

Panelists: Rahul Rawat, William Bosu, Bakary Koné, Ibrahim Haoua, Catherine Gibba,

Moderator: Omar Dary | Facilitators: Joao Jaque Sanca Malu and Maria Jefferds

This session focused on how data are handled across the various stages of the data value chain to inform decision-making. The plenary session highlighted how data are transformed into information and subsequently knowledge to inform the decision-making process. Maria Jefferds from the CDC, provided a summary of the first three sessions and identified the need for: *i)* coordination around indicators, *ii)* building a multisectoral information system, *iii)* inclusion of key nutrition indicators in national information systems, particularly coverage indicators, *iv)* ensuring the use and sharing of existing



guidance on data collection, v) strengthening inter-sectoral coordination and building a multisectoral information system, and vi) thinking about data in terms of decisions and actions they allow to make. Through two country examples, this session showcased how one can connect the different stages of the chain. Rebecca Pradeilles from Loughborough University elaborated on data coherence within and across nutrition-relevant policies and programs in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. Saadou Bakoye, the Secretary General from the Ministry of Planning in Niger, gave the example of how NIPN integrated policy makers and data providers to prioritize and implement nutrition data analysis based on policy needs in Niger.

The panel discussion focused on key take away messages for the panelists at global, regional, and country level. Rahul Rawat from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation highlighted that the use of country voices to set the global agenda was a key take away from the Data Forum at global level. At regional level, William Bosu (WAHO) focused on the need for capacity building across the data value chain and a regional strategic plan to develop a shared platform in the region to look at the data needs. Lastly, at country level Bakary Koné (Direction de la Santé, Ministry of Health Mali), Omar Haoua Ibrahim (Institut National de la Statistique, Niger), and Catherine Gibba (National Nutrition Agency, The Gambia), talked about ownership, transparency, and accountability; intersectoral coordination; and the purpose of data as key take aways.

Omar Dary closed this session with a summary and overview of the prioritized calls to action by the participants during the breakout sessions.

This session allowed participants to *i)* understand how data are handled across the value chain and the potential use and usefulness to inform decision-making; *ii)* be able to critically evaluate the functioning of the data value chain as a whole and identify nutrition information gaps in their context and some possible ways to address these gaps; and *iii)* reflect on how efforts to strengthen the data value chain for nutrition can be applied to their context.

Session 4 Key calls to action	
Ranking	Grouped top priorities
1	Strategy and coordination agreed upon costed strategic plan for strengthening the value chain under the auspices of a higher-level body with institutionalized routine M&E and adjustments
	Elaboration of a capacity building, monitoring and tracking plan for the actors of the value chain
2	Involve primary actors at country level into the development of standardized actionable nutrition indicators, including coverage indicators
	Establish a supra-ministerial multisectoral coordination framework in order to ensure the accountability of the sectors that enable the pooling of the sectoral data (see Niger/Burkina Faso for example)
3	Inclusive process across sectors to agree upon actionable indicators and develop a roadmap for a fully integrated and accessible data system
	Define standards for intervention packages at national and regional level
4	Research to be demand driven and not funding driven
	Establish a nutrition data quality assurance institution (quality control of all surveys)
5	On the job training/coaching
	Build an accessible platform for all nutrition-related data

Speakers

	Name	Affiliation	Title
	Richmond Nii Okai Aryeetey	University of Ghana	Associate Professor
	Tricia Aung	Johns Hopkins School of Public Health	Research Associate
	Barbara Baille	UNICEF	Nutrition Specialist
	Saadou Bakoye	Ministère du Plan	Secretary General
	William Bosu	WAHO	Professional Officer for Non-Epidemic Diseases and NCD
	Tomé Ca	WAHO	Professional Officer in charge of the Health Information System
	Namukolo Covic	IFPRI/TNWA	Senior Research Coordinator
	Omar Dary	USAID	Health (Nutrition) Science Specialist

	Cheikh Faye	APHRC	Head of the APHRC West Africa Regional Office
	Augustin Flory	Results for Development	Managing Director, Nutrition and Integrated Strategies
	Catherine Gibba	National Nutrition Agency	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
	Stuart Gillespie	IFPRI, TNWA	Senior Research Fellow
	Omar Haoua Ibrahim	Institut National de la Statistique (INS) du Niger / NIPN Niger	Secrétaire Générale
	Chika Hayashi	UNICEF HQ	Senior Adviser Statistics and Monitoring
	Rebecca Heidkamp	DataDENT/Johns Hopkins University	Assistant Scientist
	Jaoa Jaque Sanca Malu	Nutritionniste - MSc	Ministère de la Santé Guinée-Bissau
	Maria Jefferds	US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Team Lead of the IMMPaCt

	Safia Jiwani	Johns Hopkins School of Public Health	Research Associate
	Namoudou Keita	WAHO	Chargé de Soins de Santé Primaires et Maladies Non Transmissibles
	Youssouf Keita	Global Support Facility / Agropolis International	Nutrition Data and Policy Expert
	Bakary Kone	Division Nutrition /Direction générale de la Santé	Chargé de la gestion des données de nutrition
	Pascal Nakelse	National Institute of Statistics in Burkina Faso	Statistician Economist
	Chitu Nduka Nelson	Federal Ministry of Budget & Planning	Head Food and Nutrition Division
	Victor Ogbodo	Alive & Thrive / FHI360 Nigeria	Project Director
	Adeyinka Onabolu	Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, Nigeria	Senior Advisor on Food Security and Nutrition
	Adelheid Onyango	WHO	Regional Adviser for Nutrition
	Kingsley Pereko	University of Cape Coast	Senior Lecturer

	Ellen Piwoz	BMGF	Lead of the Nutrition Strategy Evidence to Action Initiative
	Rebecca Pradeilles	Loughborough University	Post-doctoral research fellow
	Veronica Quartey	Family Health Division of the Ghana Health Service	Deputy Chief Nutrition Officer with the Family Health Division of the Ghana Health Service
	Dr Kouame Oka Rene	Ministre de la Santé et de l'Hygiene Publique en Côte d'Ivoire	Coordonnateur du Programme National de Nutrition
	Kamil Shoretire	Accelerating Nutrition Results in Nigeria / World Bank Nigeria	Project Manager
	Manisha Tharaney	FHI 360, Alive & Thrive	Deputy Director, Africa Programs
	Roos Verstraeten	IFPRI, TNWA	Research coordinator
	Maurice Zafimanjaka	Alive & Thrive	Program Director, A&T Burkina Faso



Noel Zagre

UNICEF

Regional Advisor Nutrition - WCAR



Celine W. Zongo

Ministère de la Santé/ Direction de la Nutrition

Attachée de santé en Épidémiologie chargée du suivi évaluation et de la gestion des données nutritionnelles à la Direction de la Nutrition



Acknowledgement

A warm thank you to all participants and contributing organizations! The organizing team would like to extend special thanks to the many individuals who made this event possible through their leadership in sessions as presenters, panellists, moderators or facilitators. We would like to acknowledge sponsorship from Transform Nutrition West Africa, DataDENT, European Union/GIZ, UNICEF, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

