TEAM

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2027
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TEAM Strategic Plan is an output of the WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) and was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This document was prepared by the strategic planning working group of the WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM), under the joint coordination of the Monitoring Nutrition Status and Food Safety Events Unit, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety, World Health Organization (WHO) and Data & Analytics Section, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, UNICEF.

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The working group acknowledges the contribution of David Hales (Consultant), for conducting the key informant interviews, data analysis and writing this report; Rafael Flores-Ayala, for providing technical consultation and reviewing during the development of the document.

The TEAM Secretariat is grateful to the key informants who shared their knowledge, experience, and thoughts for this assessment.
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<th>ACRONYMS</th>
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<td>TEAM</td>
<td>Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>GNMF</td>
<td>Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework</td>
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<td>IYCF</td>
<td>Infant and young child feeding</td>
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<td>FHI 360</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
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<td>DHS</td>
<td>Demographic and Health Survey</td>
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<td>DataDENT</td>
<td>Data for Decisions to Expand Nutrition Transformation</td>
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<td>JME</td>
<td>Joint Malnutrition Estimates</td>
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<td>SPA</td>
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In 2015, WHO and UNICEF established the independent Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) to advise on global nutrition monitoring. A specific focus of TEAM during its first two years was the development of an extended set of indicators to monitor the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition, consistent with the global nutrition targets agreed by the World Health Assembly (WHA). In recent years, the scope of work for TEAM has expanded its collaborations with various partner organizations.

When TEAM was established, there was no formal strategy in place to guide its activities. In 2021, TEAM decided to take a retrospective look at its objectives and what it has accomplished as well as a prospective view of where it should be going. It was an opportunity to think critically about what is working and what should be changed with its activities. It was also an opportunity to articulate why TEAM exists, how its expertise is used, and what contributions it can make to nutrition monitoring.

This retrospective and prospective process drove the development TEAM’s strategy for the next five years. The strategy will help guide TEAM’s priorities, streamline decision making, identify synergies with partners, and communicate key messages to the greater nutrition community.

The objective of the overall strategy is to establish TEAM as a visible and effective leader in nutrition monitoring by playing an active and assertive role in identifying and articulating priority needs and opportunities to strengthen monitoring activities. The objective has both short and long-term implications. There is a short-term need (6-12 months) to build the capacity of TEAM to take a stronger leadership position in nutrition monitoring. There is a longer-term need/opportunity (three to five years) to use its leadership position to make significant contributions to nutrition monitoring.

The strategic planning process yielded six core strategies that have the potential to move TEAM forward in ways that can expand and enhance its role in global nutrition monitoring:

1. Maintain the focus on technical expertise and enhance the technical capacity of TEAM
2. Ensure TEAM has a combined advisory, ‘product development’ and coordinating-collaborating-harmonizing role
3. Expand the scope of TEAM’s work to include other priority topic areas
4. Identify high-priority needs/opportunities and deliver practical solutions/products to address them
5. Develop an operating model to support TEAM’s growing activities
6. Increase the tempo of the work to deliver practical, high-quality outputs more quickly
While there could be specific benefits to implementing each of the six strategies individually, the power of the approach comes with their integration. Executed collectively, they are a highly pragmatic way to earn and sustain a needed and useful role in nutrition monitoring.

The proposed strategies are pragmatic ways for TEAM to apply the lessons from its past and position itself as an open, innovative, and practical leader committed to playing a needed and useful role in nutrition monitoring. But the strategies will only yield results if they are effectively operationalized via the development and implementation of a prioritized and funded action plan.

This planning exercise is not considered a one-off activity, but the basis of a continuing process that will be an integral part of TEAM’s work in the coming years.
1. BACKGROUND

In 2015, WHO and UNICEF established an independent Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) to advise on enhancing global nutrition monitoring at all levels. A specific focus of the TEAM during the first two years was developing an extended set of indicators to monitor the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition, consistent with the global nutrition targets decided by the World Health Assembly (WHA)\(^1\). Since then, TEAM has worked to identify and address emerging research questions and needs related to nutrition monitoring. TEAM is also expected to help identify emerging research needs related to nutrition monitoring, and to recommend priorities for global nutrition monitoring. More information on TEAM and its activities is available at https://www.who.int/nutrition/team/en/.

During the first few years, TEAM provided technical support to the development of the indicators and operational guidance for the Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework (GNMF)\(^2\) as WHO’s priority to respond to the demand of the Member States to monitor the progress towards the achievement of the global nutrition targets set for 2025. TEAM was instrumental in the development of the guidance and recommendations for nutrition monitoring, e.g., methodology for monitoring progress of the global nutrition targets\(^3\), recommendations for data collection, analysis and reporting on anthropometric indicators in children under 5 years old\(^4\), and the prevalence thresholds for malnutrition in children under 5 years\(^5\).

Over the past years, the scope of work for TEAM has expanded to a large extent, and several major undertakings were included in its workplan. TEAM provided technical support to the development of two major global goods – a guidance document for assessing infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices\(^6\) and a guidance document for designing and implementing national nutrition information system\(^7\). TEAM is currently engaged in several activities that are being carried out by more than ten working groups. The main workplan items include development and validation of indicators for antenatal iron supplementation\(^8\)\(^9\), breastfeeding counseling\(^10\), diet quality\(^11\), coverage of nutrition interventions, and development of a guidance document for haemoglobin/anaemia assessment. TEAM is also supporting to address unresolved research questions related to anthropometry data quality, implementation of the new IYCF guidance, and providing technical advice for the annual Joint Malnutrition Estimates (JME).

TEAM activities are often conducted in collaboration with the partner organizations, e.g., Nutrition International, University of South Carolina, International Food Policy Research Institute, USAID Advancing Nutrition, FHI 360, Alive & Thrive and other UN organizations. TEAM was instrumental in
formulating the recommendations for the nutrition module of the Demographic and Health Survey Questionnaire – Phase 8 (DHS8). The TEAM working group for the intervention coverage measurements took part in the review process of the DHS Service Provision Assessment (SPA) questionnaire in partnership with the Data for Decisions to Expand Nutrition Transformation (DataDENT).
2. **RATIONALES**

TEAM is relatively new but has already crossed six years. Although the terms of reference include a set of roles and responsibilities for TEAM and its operational modalities as guiding principles, since its inception, there was no formal strategic plan in place for this group to guide its activities. This is an important time to take a retrospective view of the objectives of TEAM and what it has accomplished since the beginning as well as a prospective view of what TEAM should be going forward. It is necessary to think critically about how things are so far and whether there is a need to change anything about how TEAM functions. For example, it was important to carefully articulate why TEAM exists, review what has worked in the last phase, how TEAM utilized its expertise to advance an important topic that have clear implications for its uptake, and the roles of TEAM that are critical to its success. Other potential and relevant questions to ask were whether TEAM has the right group of experts and if there is a need to expand the membership to strengthen its capacity and scope of work. It was important to identify something that did not work out in the way that had been envisioned.

There are similar technical advisory groups in other areas, such as the Child Health Accountability Tracking (CHAT)\(^1\) and the Mother, Newborn Information for Tracking Outcomes and Results (MoNITOR)\(^2\), and the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group of Experts (STAGE)\(^3\) on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition, managed by the WHO Department of Maternal and Child and Adolescents Health (MCA). Although these independent technical advisory groups have clear objectives, they were formed after the TEAM and some overlaps exist in nutrition as MCA covers aspects of nutrition through its life cycle approach, i.e., maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition. It was useful to look at how those other groups function, what are some of the lessons that TEAM can learn from these groups, the synergies across these groups and potential ways of collaboration with them in areas of mutual interest.

With these rationales in mind, the TEAM Secretariat decided to develop TEAM’s strategic planning for the next five years. The new strategic plan will provide a common understanding about TEAM’s mandate, help guide TEAM to set directions and priorities of its future work, simplify decision making, identify synergies across groups dealing with nutrition monitoring, and communicate messages with [1 More information is available at https://www.who.int/groups/child-health-accountability-tracking-technical-advisory-group](https://www.who.int/groups/child-health-accountability-tracking-technical-advisory-group)
relevant partners. This in turn will be more meaningful and impactful for WHO and UNICEF’s nutrition monitoring activities as well as TEAM’s role as a global leader of the nutrition community.

The purpose of this exercise is to describe an updated strategy for the TEAM for the next five years.
3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Objectives

This strategic plan was developed to provide the TEAM Secretariat with a clear path to guide the future development of the activities and operation. This will include the continued provision of an efficient system to better manage TEAM and its activities in the future.

Methodology

The terms of reference of the TEAM and the existing TEAM mission were reviewed and analyzed critically to understand the roles and responsibilities of TEAM, and its operations.

The development of the proposed strategy was heavily driven by extended interviews with a diverse group of 22 key informants, including past and present TEAM members as well as other experts in the field. The interviews were conducted confidentially to encourage participants to speak openly about their perspectives on TEAM’s past, present and future activities and/or opportunities. The semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted following an interview guide.

This planning exercise is not considered a one-off activity, but the basis of a continuing process that will accompany the TEAM Secretariat’s work in the coming years. The strategic plan will need to be operationalized via a prioritized action plan.
4. REVIEW OF THE EXISTING TEAM MISSION AND PROBLEM STATEMENTS

This section of the document has two parts: (i) brief review of the existing TEAM mission statement; and (ii) sector-wide and TEAM-specific problem statements. The problem statements are based on perspectives shared by key informants supplemented by an analysis of other perspectives on the current state of nutrition monitoring.

TEAM mission statement

The existing mission statement for TEAM is sufficiently broad to cover multiple directions and activities (Box 1). This includes past and present TEAM projects and products as well as the future-oriented strategic directions described in this document. However, there are ambiguities in the mission statement that should be acknowledged and addressed in the context of the future of TEAM. For example, it is important to reconcile the advising role of TEAM, which is cited in the first sentence, with the more active or action-oriented role described in the second sentence; specifically, "the development of harmonized standards, tools and approaches". A typical dictionary definition of advise is "to offer suggestions about the best course of action to someone". Similarly, a typical definition of advisory is "having or consisting in the power to make recommendations but not to take action enforcing them". While TEAM is identified as an Advisory Group, its most cited achievements by key informants are the substantive ‘products’ it has developed (e.g., the Global nutrition monitoring framework: operational guidance for tracking progress in meeting targets for 2025, published in 2017; the Recommendations for data collection, analysis and reporting on anthropometric indicators in children under 5 years old, published in 2019; and the Indicators for assessing infant and young child feeding practices: definitions and measurement methods, published in 2021).

Box 1.

TEAM Mission Statement

The TEAM will advise on how to improve the quality of nutrition monitoring efforts at all levels. The group will achieve this through the facilitation of shared learning and the development of harmonized standards, tools and approaches in several relevant sectors such as health, social protection, agriculture.

The TEAM is also expected to identify emerging research questions and needs related to the implementation of monitoring initiatives and to communicate these to appropriate partners.

* TEAM’s terms of reference are available at https://www.who.int/groups/who-unicef-technical-expert-advisory-group-on-nutrition-monitoring/about
The ambiguity in the mission statement between advisory versus action-oriented is complicated by statements in the original terms of reference for TEAM. According to the terms of reference, “All recommendations from the TEAM are advisory to WHO and UNICEF, who retain full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the TEAM. WHO and UNICEF also retain full control over the publication of the reports of the TEAM, including whether or not to publish them.”

In the mission statement, there is also ambiguity about how the “facilitation of shared learning” is defined. There is also a lack of clarity about the level of involvement and activity by TEAM in this “facilitation.” The lack of clarity about what this means is compounded by the fact that there is widespread acknowledgement among key informants that TEAM has not been effective at communications, including disseminating or sharing its own work/products. There is a similar ambiguity around research with questions raised by key informants about whether TEAM’s role is solely to “identify emerging research questions and needs” or whether TEAM should play a more active role in framing and pursuing the research. In addition, the list of TEAM’s roles and responsibilities in the terms of reference can be interpreted in various ways, ranging from purely advisory to active involvement in product development.

Investing significant time and energy in a major revision of the mission statement has the potential to distract TEAM from taking much-needed steps to invigorate its operations and more actively assert itself in the area of nutrition monitoring. At this point, TEAM may be best served to leave the mission statement as is, make only minor revisions on an accelerated schedule or take on a major revision as a long-term, low-priority activity.

**Problem statements**

The proposed strategy is designed to address the sector-wide and TEAM-specific problem statements. It also reflects the perspective that an effective strategy is used to guide decisions about where and how to act in order to complete priority activities and achieve strategic objectives.

**Sector-wide:**
- Nutrition needs more and better data and analysis to strengthen its case for greater support and investment at global, regional, national, and sub-national levels.
- Nutrition programmes need more and better data and analysis to improve their design, implementation, and performance and to demonstrate the value of their activities and outcomes.
- Improvements in a range of monitoring activities would help address the deficiencies in the quantity and quality of data, data analysis and data use.
- Strong, independent leadership in nutrition monitoring is vital if much-needed improvements in data and analysis are going to be scaled up and delivered in a timely manner.
TEAM-specific:
- TEAM is currently positioned as an advisory group to WHO and UNICEF; however, its current mission statement also clearly states it will have a role in “the development of harmonized standards, tools and approaches in several relevant sectors such as health, social protection, agriculture.” There is a lack of clarity about how TEAM can or should fill each role.
- TEAM has the potential to be an effective leader in nutrition monitoring, but it is unclear if it has the remit or the support of its conveners to play that role.
- TEAM has a deliberate approach that currently lacks the supportive structure and the operational agility to be a leader in the increasingly dynamic and diverse sector of nutrition.
5. PROPOSED STRATEGY

This section of the document has two parts: (i) objective of the overall or integrated strategy; and (ii) descriptions of each of the six core strategies that make up the overall/integrated strategy.

**Objective of the proposed strategy**

The objective of the proposed strategy is to establish TEAM as a visible and effective leader in the arena of nutrition monitoring by: (i) playing an active and assertive role in identifying and articulating priority needs and opportunities to strengthen monitoring activities; and (ii) working on its own projects and initiatives and with the broader nutrition-monitoring community to address those needs and opportunities in a practical and timely fashion.

The objective has both short and long-term implications. There is a short-term need (6-12 months) to build the capacity of TEAM to take a stronger leadership position in nutrition monitoring; ensuring its capacity is maintained is an ongoing responsibility. There is a longer-term need/opportunity (three to five years) to use its leadership position to make significant contributions to nutrition monitoring. The dynamic nature of the strategy (e.g., its focus on identifying, understanding, and responding to priorities in nutrition and nutrition monitoring as they evolve) could extend its value and viability beyond five years.

This strategy would place equal emphasis on TEAM’s advisory role outlined in its current terms of reference as well as on it having an engaged role as a driver of change in nutrition monitoring. While the advisory role would still be a part of TEAM, there should be more focus on leading, catalyzing and contributing to improvements in nutrition monitoring.

**Core Strategies**

As mentioned above, the process of identifying a viable and beneficial strategy for TEAM relied heavily on an extended set of interviews with knowledgeable key informants. These interviews provided fundamental insights into the TEAM’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The interviews were supplemented with additional research on the current state and future needs/opportunities of nutrition monitoring with an eye toward how TEAM can best contribute.
This process yielded six core strategies that have the potential to move TEAM forward in ways that can expand and enhance its role in global nutrition monitoring. Strategies 1, 2, 3 and 4 have clear long-term implications for the work of TEAM and underpin the objective of making significant and lasting contributions to nutrition monitoring. Strategies 5 and 6 have an operational focus, but they are included in the list because they have compelling strategic implications for TEAM. There is a need to examine the operations and tempo of TEAM to enhance its capacity and relevance.

1. Maintain the focus on technical expertise and enhance the technical capacity of TEAM
2. Ensure TEAM has a combined advisory, ‘product development’ and coordinating-collaborating-harmonizing role
3. Expand the scope of TEAM’s work to include other priority topic areas
4. Identify high-priority needs/opportunities and deliver practical solutions/products to address them
5. Develop an operating model to support TEAM’s growing activities
6. Increase the tempo of the work to deliver practical, high-quality outputs more quickly

While there could be specific benefits to implementing each of the six strategies individually, the power of the approach comes with their integration. Executed collectively, they are a highly pragmatic way to earn and sustain a needed and useful role in nutrition monitoring.

Maintain the focus on technical expertise and enhance the technical capacity of TEAM

Technical expertise has been the foundation of TEAM’s credibility and its achievements since it was founded. The individual and collective credentials of the appointed members/advisors (e.g., their knowledge, skills, and experience) have defined the technical focus and capacity of the group. The technical prowess of TEAM has also communicated and reinforced the importance of impartiality and objectivity in its work.

Strategically, maintaining the focus on technical expertise and enhancing the technical capacity of TEAM should be a priority for two key reasons: i) it is a demonstrative commitment to the practical and substantive issues that must be addressed to improve nutrition monitoring; and ii) it positions
TEAM as a leader in global nutrition monitoring that prioritizes balanced, sensible and open-minded thinking and approaches to solve real-world problems (i.e., for TEAM, technical issues are more important than political ones).

The individual and collective credentials of TEAM members should continue to define the technical focus and capacity of the group. However, there should be a conscious move to diversify the membership of the group to ensure it is more broadly representative, including individuals with strong practical/implementation experience at national and sub-national levels and people with technical knowledge and skills in various areas of nutrition. In addition, if TEAM modifies its scope to include other priority areas, it should also consider increasing the number of members above the 15 specified in its terms of reference to broaden its collective expertise. It will also be important to ensure the purpose and approach of TEAM is clear that: (i) members understand and make the necessary commitments and contributions to TEAM activities; (ii) collective technical expertise of TEAM is applied with rigor; and (iii) the TEAM Secretariat provides the support needed by its members to do meaningful work on behalf of the group. In addition, TEAM should identify a cadre of consultants with requisite knowledge and skills to support TEAM activities with an equivalent level of rigor and with the necessary support from the Secretariat.

TEAM should also leverage the credibility that comes from its technical focus and capacity to take positions on issues in order to spark and drive improvement in nutrition monitoring (e.g., working papers, journal articles, expert opinion pieces). TEAM’s technical prowess should be a platform to raise challenging questions, to encourage innovative thinking and to move the field beyond conventional positions. It can also be used to actively identify and engage with other relevant organizations, and to promote and support more and better coordination and collaboration on key issues.

**Ensure TEAM has a combined advisory, ‘product development’ and coordinating-collaborating-harmonizing role**

To be an effective leader in nutrition monitoring, TEAM’s remit must include three core activity areas: (i) advisory group for its UN convening organizations (e.g., WHO and UNICEF); (ii) “the development of harmonized standards, tools and approaches” (i.e., “products”); and (iii) enhanced coordination, collaboration and harmonization with other organizations and initiatives working on nutrition monitoring. This remit could be articulated in an updated mission statement, but it could also be treated as a simple, internal clarification of the ambiguities in the current mission statement.

**Advisory group.** The advisory connection to WHO and UNICEF has been a defining feature of TEAM. It is an effective way to bring together a compelling mix of independent technical experts to provide input and advice on nutrition monitoring to these organizations. It also provides the TEAM with a credible and valuable platform to address priority issues in nutrition monitoring.

It will be important to clearly define the parameters of TEAM’s advisory role, particularly vis-à-vis its ‘product development’ role. For example, what are the core expectations and basic protocols when WHO and/or UNICEF seek advice from TEAM? What are the core expectations and basic protocols if TEAM seeks to proactively offer advice to WHO and/or UNICEF? Do TEAM members have to agree on the advice provided or is there room for diverse and/or dissenting positions?
Product development. The need for better standards, tools and approaches for monitoring is widely acknowledged in the nutrition sector. TEAM is well positioned to play a leading role in the development of these products, given its past work and its ongoing commitment to a strong and objective technical approach. In fact, the terms of reference for TEAM identify its initial task when it was founded as “the development of the extended set of indicators to monitor the comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition as related to the WHA global nutrition targets.”

If TEAM is going to play a more active role in developing useful products for improved nutrition monitoring, it will need to strengthen its operating model to ensure high-quality products are developed in a timely manner. One of the primary issues is to balance the pro bono status of TEAM members with the extensive time demands of product development (i.e., how can the expertise of TEAM members best be tapped in the product development process). A practical option is a collaboration between TEAM Secretariat/members and one or more competent consultants with the TEAM members providing technical input and oversight and the consultant(s) doing the day-to-day work on the development of the product. This approach is widely used in comparable contexts, including, for example, by MoNITOR (Mother and Newborn Information for Tracking Outcomes and Results) at WHO.

Coordination, collaboration, harmonization. The multi-sectoral and multi-faceted nature of nutrition has contributed to the development of a growing array of organizations and initiatives doing work directly or indirectly related to nutrition monitoring. While there is formal and informal coordination and collaboration between some of these organizations and initiatives, it should be done strategically or systematically for better outcomes. In the priority topic areas where it chooses to operate, TEAM has a significant opportunity to promote, support and lead a thoughtful and organized approach to much-needed coordination, collaboration, and harmonization around nutrition monitoring.

Expand the scope of TEAM’s work to include other priority topic areas

TEAM has historically focused on issues related to maternal and child health (MCH) and infant and young child feeding (IYCF). While these issues remain important, there are other topic areas in the highly diverse nutrition sector that need strengthened monitoring if they are going to fully exploit their potential to improve people’s health and well-being. Areas mentioned by multiple key informants included food, diet quality and micronutrients. As one key informant said, “If not TEAM, who else?”

In addition, there are various monitoring-related issues (e.g., assessments of existing indicators, service quality measures, surveillance, new data-collections approaches and tools, and data use) — many of which cut across different nutrition topic areas — that would also benefit from TEAM’s input.

As is the case with identifying high-priority needs and opportunities, TEAM will need to have a process in place to identify the topic areas — and the corresponding needs and opportunities in those areas — where it can make meaningful contributions. The process should also include a mechanism to regularly review the topics, needs and opportunities to ensure TEAM is continuing to effectively prioritize its activities and produce in line with its priorities. This process should be
open and transparent to demonstrate that TEAM is working without bias and in the best interests of nutrition monitoring.

Any expansion in the topical remit is likely to raise questions about who convenes or sponsors TEAM and who serves as members. It is worth noting the possibility of adding conveners/sponsors to TEAM is a polarizing topic among key informants with some strongly in favor and others strongly opposed. However, if TEAM is going to take a more expansive and integrated approach to nutrition, including issues related to food, it would be beneficial to find a formal or structured role for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), given its position as the lead UN agency on food and agriculture. If and how other conveners/sponsors could be brought into TEAM is an open question, but there are other viable options for relevant parties that could be explored if adding convenors is not seen as beneficial (e.g., permanent observer; non-voting, ex officio status).

Increasing the number of TEAM members to help cover an expanded remit is generally seen by key informants as a positive step, assuming the operating model of TEAM is able to support more members and support an increase in activities that would likely come with a larger membership. The issue mentioned above about the representativeness of the members would apply to an expanded membership, particularly the inclusion of individuals with strong practical/implementation experience at national and sub-national levels.

An expansion of TEAM’s scope could also be done by forging formal alliances and/or developing collaborative relationships with other organizations or initiatives working in areas identified by TEAM as a supportive of its mission to strengthen nutrition monitoring.

**Identify high priority needs and opportunities and deliver practical and timely solutions/products to address them**

There were strong feelings among key informants that TEAM needs to think regularly and critically about what one informant succinctly identified as “what the world needs”. There were equally strong feelings that field-driven issues should take precedence in this process (e.g., issues that have practical value for countries and implementers). TEAM has a parallel responsibility to acknowledge why these needs exist and to determine whether and how it can contribute to addressing them.

This strategy dovetails with the preceding one about TEAM’s technical focus and capacity. One of the principal values of having technical prowess in a particular field is to bring it to bear on pressing issues in that field. For TEAM, the fundamental challenge will be to develop and implement an efficient and transparent process to identify and prioritize needs/opportunities and deliver solutions. Implicit in this challenge is determining how to ensure the identification and prioritization process is fair and objective.

The transparency of the process is important because TEAM should be seen as openly and actively considering and responding to the critical needs of the broader nutrition-monitoring community when setting its agenda. For example, a lack of clarity about TEAM’s advisory role with WHO and UNICEF can raise questions about whether TEAM has an obligation to focus on the monitoring priorities of these two organizations. There are similar concerns that TEAM has historically prioritized...
issues of interest to current members of the group. While it is possible these concerns are more perceptions than fact, TEAM would benefit by being more transparent about its agenda.

On its own, the process of identifying and prioritizing needs and opportunities could be a compelling product of TEAM that would help define it as a leader in the field. Having a group of acknowledged experts collectively take positions on monitoring needs and opportunities and communicate those positions to the broader community on a regular basis can help stimulate much-needed discussion and action about key issues, regardless of whether TEAM has a direct role in addressing them.

In order to deliver practical and timely solutions for the prioritized needs and opportunities, TEAM must revamp its overall approach to ‘product development.’ Given the fundamental importance of this issue to the raison d'être of TEAM, it is addressed in two separate strategies.

Input from multiple key informants linked this strategy to a specific activity seen as a high priority need and opportunity with a high value for countries and implementers: Develop practical and prioritized indicator sets and related guidance for discrete issues and/or topics areas within nutrition. The guidance would include directions on selecting indicators to match national and sub-national context and how indicators and indicator data can be used to understand and improve nutrition programmes.

**Develop an operating model to support TEAM’s growing activities**

A robust operating model is essential if TEAM is going to play a more active and assertive role in global nutrition monitoring. In addition, the ability to sustain a useful, leadership role is likely to require an operating model that has the flexibility to adapt to changing dynamics in the nutrition sector. A robust operating model for TEAM — strong, pragmatic, fit for purpose — can and should be a simple and straightforward model with a strong emphasis on the ‘who, what, when, where, why and how’ associated with different activities. An updated operating model should also be an adaptation of the existing model, not a complete restructuring. Essentially, the basic structure of TEAM should remain in place, albeit with more emphasis on the aforementioned ‘who, what, when, where, why and how’.

It is important to clarify the structure of TEAM as it exists now. The terms of reference for TEAM outline a very basic one: WHO and UNICEF are the “joint conveners”; WHO and UNICEF serve as the “joint Secretariat”; and “up to 15 members who shall serve in their personal capacities and represent a broad range of disciplines relevant to the mandate.” However, in addition to this basic structure, there are other aspects to the structure and its operation.

- Typically, a convener is responsible for bringing people together to address an issue, problem or opportunity, which is what WHO and UNICEF did when they created TEAM. In this context, the WHO and UNICEF role as joint convener can be seen as completed once TEAM was launched.
- The primary role of a secretariat is to manage administrative operations in support of the core work of the organization. In the case of TEAM, the Secretariat supports the chair/co-chairs and the priority activities of members individually and collectively (e.g., working groups). The role of the joint Secretariat is an important and ongoing one.
- The members are the essential core of TEAM. It is their expertise and their efforts that
define the group. Without the members, there is no TEAM. However, the members are selected by WHO and UNICEF and a member can be removed with cause by these organizations. According to the terms of reference, WHO and UNICEF also select the chair or co-chairs of TEAM; however, a practice of having members elect the chair/chairs is now the norm, although this has not been documented.

Although it is not mentioned specifically in the terms of reference, WHO and UNICEF also have a separate and ongoing role as a “sponsor” or “patron” of TEAM, which goes beyond the normal role of a secretariat. For example, they confer legitimacy on the organization; they quality-control, approve and disseminate outputs/products; and they secure and manage funding for TEAM.

In addition, WHO and UNICEF play a role in setting the agenda for TEAM (e.g., identifying important needs and opportunities for the group’s consideration). While TEAM is responsible for developing its own specific workplan — with the support from the Secretariat, as needed — WHO and UNICEF do have input into and influence over the agenda.

The existing, de facto operating model is based on the original terms of reference for TEAM and the roles outlined above. However, there is a lack of clarity and specificity needed to address critical operating issues that have arisen as TEAM’s work has evolved since its founding. A well-defined operating model will clarify — and document — the essential roles, responsibilities, and relationships of the different parties (see the bullet points above). This clarification and documentation should include a simple, well-defined governance system. The operating model should also focus on how it can contribute to the performance of TEAM in line with the integrated strategies and their overall objective.

It is important not to overcomplicate the operating model; as mentioned above, it should be straightforward. If it is too detailed or prescriptive, it will undermine the ability of TEAM to use its collective expertise to think smartly and creatively about nutrition monitoring.

The process of revising the operating model does not have to be complicated or burdensome. Revising the operating model will require addressing a series of operational (i.e., tactical) issues; for example, a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the various players, including how they collaborate and integrate. However, as mentioned above, the imperative to strengthen the operating model raises this overall endeavor to a strategic level. And given the importance of ongoing maintenance — and possibly evolution — of the model, it is worthwhile treating it as a strategic issue for the foreseeable future.

Critical questions to consider when developing a robust operating model for TEAM include:

**WHO & UNICEF**

- How are decisions about TEAM made by WHO and UNICEF? Is there a formal mechanism/structure? How is information critical to decision-making shared among the conveners?
- How is the sponsor/patron role separated from the Secretariat role? Does it need to be?
- What role do WHO and UNICEF have in influencing the agenda and/or workplan for TEAM?
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- How best can WHO and UNICEF ensure TEAM has the financial resources to play an active and assertive leadership role, including resources for the Secretariat and for specific products or pieces of work? For example, should connections be made with possible funders about discrete pieces of work? Should additional unrestricted funds be sought from other supporters?
- Should other sponsors/patrons be added to TEAM? For example, should FAO be added, considering the interest in having TEAM address food-related issues? What are the pros and cons of adding other sponsors/patrons? Are there practical and beneficial alternatives to adding them?
- Should other organizations help shape the agenda for TEAM (e.g., FAO)? What are the pros and cons? How would it be implemented?
- What can conveners do to minimize the effects of their own bureaucratic processes on the work of TEAM?

Secretariat
- What is the relationship between the Secretariat and the members? Is it based primarily on the Secretariat providing administrative support?
- How can the Secretariat provide better, more active support for TEAM activities? What support does the Secretariat itself need from the conveners to expand its role?
- How can TEAM support a more ambitious and more opportunistic agenda with a lean and cost-effective Secretariat?
- How can the Secretariat fund and support a more extensive use of consultants to move TEAM projects forward on a more aggressive schedule?
- How can communications about TEAM and its activities and/or positions be improved, expanded, and expedited?
- Are twice-a-year meetings an effective way to conduct TEAM business? (Acknowledging that some Working Groups meet more frequently.)

Members
- What is the best way to use the expertise of TEAM members to support and/or drive activities? Are they solely advisors? Are they active participants in the development of TEAM products? Do all members have the same role?
- How can pursuing and/or expecting quality inputs from TEAM members be balanced with their pro bono status? Should TEAM provide guidelines on the time commitments expected from members? (The only related point in the TEAM terms of reference is that a member can be terminated from the group for “failure to attend two consecutive TEAM meetings”)
- Should there be term limits for TEAM members? Would having term limits help members better manage their commitments to TEAM? What effects — positive or negative — would terms limits (i.e., member turnover) have on TEAM operations? (The TEAM terms of reference only mention a two-year minimum commitment.)
- What support from the secretariat would members need to complete tasks more efficiently? (Identified as “supporting functions” in the TEAM terms of reference.)
- What steps can be taken to encourage and support active participation by all members?
- What can be done to have more diverse expertise and perspectives across the membership?
How can Working Groups be more productive and more accountable for outputs/deliverables? Do they need a different structure? A different mandate? Different types of support?

Cross-cutting

- What should be the governance structure of TEAM? For example, should it be governed solely by the conveners? Should there be a “executive committee” with clear roles and responsibilities, which includes the conveners, a representative from the Secretariat and the designated co-chairs who are responsible for governance and oversight?
- What is the best way to ensure collective TEAM decisions are made fairly and efficiently (e.g., prioritization of issues/agendas, development of workplans, budgets, member sign-offs)?
- How and where should greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in TEAM be documented? Should the terms of reference be revised?
- What level of independence does TEAM — specifically, TEAM as a group of experts — have from WHO and UNICEF? What are the implications if TEAM chose to disagree with the conveners on an issue?

Increase the tempo of the work to deliver practical, high-quality outputs more quickly

An increased tempo rises to the level of a strategy because timeliness must be a priority for leaders when needs and/or demands are high and when change is an integral — and increasingly fast-moving — attribute of a sector. The charged dynamics in the nutrition sector, including the emerging opportunities to raise the profile of nutrition and expand its multisectoral influence and contributions, support the contention by multiple key informants that TEAM must move much more quickly and more assertively if it wants to be a force in nutrition and nutrition monitoring. There were parallel concerns that continuing with the current pace of work risks marginalizing TEAM and its outputs.

There was also a shared perspective among many informants that a convergence of factors, ranging from heightened awareness about the role of nutrition in lifelong health and well-being to the intersection of nutrition and COVID-19 to the potential impact of climate change on diet and food security, has created another critical moment or turning point for nutrition to deliver on its potential. As one key informant said, “Nutrition needs to up its game.” An increased tempo as an integral feature of a robust operating model is an important and visible way for nutrition to do just that.

While an increased tempo is the central component of this strategy, the link to “practical, high-quality outputs” is essential. An increased tempo that leads to less useful or lower standard outputs would be a failure. But increased tempo and practical, high-quality outputs are not incompatible; achieving both can be challenging — ergo the importance of a robust operating model — but not unreasonable or unrealistic.

One of the biggest obstacles to increasing the tempo of TEAM’s work could be the structures, systems, and processes within the convening organizations. Options to better operate within the
organizational and institutional constraints of the conveners should be explored and tested as part of this strategy, including granting a level of autonomy or independence to TEAM that does not violate the standards and practices of the conveners.
6. CONCLUSION

TEAM has the potential to build on its history and track record to become a visible and effective leader in nutrition monitoring and, by extension, an important contributor to the ongoing evolution of the nutrition sector overall. Key informants were in full agreement that the need for better leadership in nutrition monitoring was essential and that TEAM was well positioned to assume that responsibility. However, there was also a broad consensus that TEAM needed to revamp its positioning and its operations if it was going to play a larger and higher profile role in nutrition monitoring. In addition, there were concerns that if TEAM did not adapt that its relevance would be diminished.

The proposed strategy is a pragmatic way for TEAM to apply the lessons from its past and position itself as an open, innovative and practical leader committed to playing a needed and useful role in nutrition monitoring. But the strategy will only yield results if it effectively operationalized via the development and implementation of a prioritized and funded action plan.