# Nutrition Information System Technical Working Group (NIS TWG)

# Terms of References (ToR)

**BACKGROUND**

# *[Background and rationale to setting up this group. Include a summary of when and why the Nutrition Cluster was established, its structure and membership. Include a summary of the NIS situation and response to date including NIS operational processes and guidelines available. Explain also why this group is being established]*

A NIS is an integrated and centrally coordinated set of processes to continuously collect, analyze and interpret nutrition-related data, transform it into information and disseminate it for making timely and effective decisions to monitor, report and ultimately improve the nutritional health of the population. Data can be nutrition-specific (i.e. anthropometric) in nature, or nutrition-sensitive (i.e. risk factors): infant and young child feeding practices; food security; WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene); or health-related to name a few. Common sources include population representative surveys: SMART methodology (Standardized Monitoring and Assessment in Relief and Transitions) and Rapid SMART surveys, UNHCR’s SENS (Standardized Expanded Nutrition Surveys), National Nutrition Surveys, UNICEF MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey), DHS (Demographic and Health Survey); coverage surveys like SQUEAC (semi-quantitative evaluation of access and coverage), SLEAC (simplified lot quality assurance sampling evaluation of access and coverage) or nutrition surveillance (sentinel sites, administrative data). Nutrition surveillance refers to a continuous longitudinal process of collecting information at specific time intervals which then feeds into the wider NIS.

**PURPOSE**

*[This below text is adaptable and tries to answer the following questions: What is the main aim of the group? What are the specific objectives of the group? What is the scope of the work/tasks?*

*It is not recommended that the group be completely absorbed by the revision or writing of the national nutrition with the government. This work is certainly very important and sometimes necessary but if it is taking more time than the group can afford, first ask UNICEF in-country, and then at regional and headquarters level as well as the Global Nutrition Cluster Core Team to help find alternative solutions that would facilitate this TWG’s work in relation to this task.]*

The NIS TWG, which can be established on a temporary or long-term basis, is often chaired by government counterparts and the NCC. Ideally, the Ministry of Health (MoH) would need to be onboard and leading or co-leading the creation of this working group. The engagement and commitment of national government is key to the success of any NIS that are currently still active. Participation should also be open to all Nutrition Cluster partners, as well as other relevant actors depending on the situation. The primary objective of this group is to improve the availability, accessibility, quality, coverage and management of the nutrition-related data collected and analyzed that feed into the national NIS.

In general, the NIS TWG is responsible for:

* designing, planning and, when required, managing the multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessments and nutrition surveys;
* developing an in-country capacity building component on NIS;
* incorporating recent recommendations[[1]](#footnote-2) on no-touch assessments and mobility restrictions given outbreaks and other contextual factors;
* supporting the coordination of the collection and use of nutrition-related data across clusters/sectors;
* promoting the harmonization of data sources including through the use of standard indicators;
* ensuring quality review and assurance tools are in place and implemented accordingly;
* sharing results from completed nutrition assessments as well as information on current and planned assessments;
* promoting partnerships with national authorities around nutrition information;
* improving the transition of the NIS prior, during and after a humanitarian crisis;
* monitoring and reporting regarding the nutrition-related response;
* serving as a forum for nutrition data-driven decision-making, particularly during a humanitarian crisis[[2]](#endnote-2).

**MAIN TASKS** *[This list is not exhaustive and should be adapted to the national context accordingly]*

1. Provide technical support in NIS guidelines and operational processes, including its contingency plan;
2. Define what nutrition information is available and what information is missing and development of the recommendations for which nutrition assessments should be conducted;
3. Identify gaps in NIS capacity at country-level and address these gaps through the development of relevant capacity building activities in NIS;
4. Map NIS related activities, identify gaps in coverage and inform the cluster partners so that these activities and gaps are integrated into relevant partner’s work plans;
5. Develop an annual nutrition assessment plan (SMART, SQUEAC, SLEAC, Link-NCA, BNA, IYCF KAP etc.) based on priority administrative areas/districts;
6. Maintain a centralized nutrition assessment database up-to-date with nutrition surveys, surveillance, and other nutrition-related data;
7. Facilitate the operationalization of the NIS guidelines through its dissemination, capacity development activities based on survey methodologies’ training toolboxes, other tools necessary for a quality implementation of NIS by partners;
8. Review and validate nutrition information collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting – the development of a contextualized quality control and validation checklist may be useful;
9. Document lessons learnt and feedback from partners that will add value and update the NIS operational processes and guidelines;
10. Monitor and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the NIS TWG on a regular basis;
11. Evaluate whether the national nutrition guidelines and policies include the latest recommendations in NIS and put together an action plan in light of the results of this evaluation;
12. Promote integration of the NIS into the government nutrition interventions through awareness activities;
13. Support the establishment and functioning of sub-national NIS working groups when relevant;
14. Provide guidance on utilization of nutrition information for program design and policy decisions in-country.

**LIFESPAN**

NIS TWG will be functional as long as there is a need for the objectives and tasks to be addressed in country. If the need is still present, yet the group is dormant, it is the responsibility of the Nutrition Cluster Coordinator (NCC) to request a change in leadership in order to reactivate the group.

**MEMBERSHIP**

*[This below text is adaptable and tries to answer the following questions: to whom is membership of the group open to? Are there criteria for being a member? Are there criteria for remaining a member? Are there any restrictions on numbers? How long is the period of membership and can it be extended?]*

Membership is granted to organizations implementing NIS activities rather than individuals. Each organization selected to be a member of the group is kindly requested to nominate one focal person and a backup person in-case the focal person is not available. This is to ensure consistency in representation and to facilitate communication. The NCC is responsible to reach out to agencies implementing NIS-related activities. The TWG is also responsible to invite government institutions, researchers and academics, epidemiologists and statisticians, national or local development actors, other sector colleagues who are involved in NIS to be members of the NIS TWG to enrich the subject matter. If those institutions are not members, then they would need to be kept informed of the group work and invited to participate to certain meetings. The TWG is not meant to be a large group, less than 10 members is optimal.

Individuals chosen as focal points of their organizations need to be knowledgeable about the NIS workplan. It is the responsibility of any member to familiarize themselves with relevant NIS documentation (including but not limited to its guidelines and operational processes) in order to build his or her own capacity. The technical capacity in NIS can be improved by reading the resources (see *Guiding Documents* section below) and undergoing trainings made available in the subject matter.

Members will be expected to attend **at least 70%** of meetings. There will also be an expectation that members undertake additional activities as outlined above. It is essential that the agencies and individuals who take up these positions are committed to fulfilling the responsibilities. Where a member is not actively participating in the NIS TWG meetings and supporting activities; they may be asked to step down from the group. In addition, members who do not attend three consecutive meetings or who do not perform the task requested by the group after three consecutive extensions, may also be asked to step down from the group.

It is recommended to have a fixed one year membership that can be evaluated at the end of the term.

**LEADERSHIP**

*[This below text is adaptable and tries to answer the following questions: Who is leading the group? How are the chairs chosen? Is there training or an orientation that the chairs needs to be aware of? Are there responsibilities the chairs would need to take on? If so, what are they? Is there a regular rotation? Will the chairs’ work be evaluated? Keep in mind that the government’s involvement is key for ownership and sustainability]*

The NIS TWG group has two chairs chosen on rotational basis for a year, each chair is responsible for leading the group for 6 months. Every 6 months, the chairs will rotate in order to keep the group active. Ideally, one chair should be led by a local government counterpart.

The chairs are chosen through a voting process with all members of the NIS WG. The minimum criteria for a chair is the ability to have technical knowledge, leadership skills and time commitment to the TWG needs all through the proposed tenure.

A ToR with the tasks of the chair will be agreed upon and shared with the chair agency supervisor. The ToR should include engaging partners, calling for the meeting, setting the agenda, preparing or consolidating the documents that need to be reviewed, ensuring minutes are taken at every meeting, following up on the action points, reminding deliverables, engage with the NCC on the NIS TWG deliverables. The role of the chair is also to ensure impartiality, identify challenges and request for support. The chair is responsible to report back to the nutrition cluster on an agreed basis and to provide a handover report before leaving the group or the position.

An evaluation of the lead work would need to take place every 6 months- this could include but is not limited to an online survey sent to the TWG members on the deliverables and the governance of the group.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

The chairs of the TWG would need to ensure the group develops a renewable 1-year workplan. The workplan should be shared with the cluster partners and the leads would need to report on the progress to the nutrition cluster partners on a monthly basis or as agreed. A self-evaluation of the group work against the set targets in the plan is to be done once a year with the results and action plan for improvements being coordinated to nutrition cluster partners.

The NIS TWG is accountable to the cluster partners. The NIS TWG will share decisions/endorsements to the cluster partners periodically through the cluster coordinator and/or chairs.

**WORKING METHODS**

The decisions will be taken by general consensus. In case a consensus cannot be reached, TWG chairs will have to seek support from the NCC on the way forward. If the technical issue is not resolved in-country, the NCC can seek guidance from the GNC-CT on behalf of the cluster partners.

**MEETINGS**

*[This below text is adaptable and tries to answer the following questions: How many meetings will be held each year and where will they be held? Who will organize and chair the meetings? How will topics for the agenda be generated? How and when will meeting papers be circulated? who will provide secretariat for the group?]*

The meetings are held in **[insert location]** on a biweekly/monthly basis on every other **[insert week day]**. The chairs of the TWG will send out the invite and the agenda of the meeting to all TWG members at least 48 hours before the meeting date. The topics on the agenda will need to be generated based on the previous meeting outcomes, the workplan deliverables and the suggestions of the members, as well as suggestions from the NCC following cluster partners’ meetings.

One of the two chairs will be responsible for:

* Circulating draft minutes to group members no later than 2 days after the meeting;
* Incorporating comments and feedback from group members;
* Circulating final minutes as soon as possible thereafter (before the next meeting);
* Uploading the minutes on the online platform **[insert a link to the online platform].**

**SHARING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

*[This below text is adaptable and tries to answer the following questions: How will group members share information and resources? Where will the meeting minutes be uploaded?]*

The online repository **[insert a link to the online platform]** is available for sharing information and resources of the NIS TWG. The agenda, minutes, deliverables, handover reports and other documents relevant to the group’s work will be uploaded on **[insert specific link under the online platform**]. Additionally, main resources, tools and guidance will be available from the Nutrition Cluster website (the chair should inform NCC to do so once a document is finalized)

**GUIDING DOCUMENTS**

**Country-level**

*[Provide the list of country-level NIS documents]*

**Global level**

[The Harmonized training package module 10](http://nutritioncluster.net/training-topics/harmonized-training-package/page/2/) Nutrition Information and Surveillance Systems

[IASC. (2011). Operational guidance on coordinated assessments in humanitarian crises](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/needs-assessment/documents-public/iasc-operational-guidance-coordinated-assessments-humanitarian)

The [Standardized Monitoring in Relief and Transition (SMART) website link](https://smartmethodology.org/)

A link to [the coverage monitoring website](http://www.coverage-monitoring.org/)

The basics of sampling can be found [here](https://smartmethodology.org/survey-planning-tools/smart-methodology/smart-methodology-paper/)

[UNHCR’s Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey](http://sens.unhcr.org/) (SENS)

Tech RRT IYCF Assessment factsheet

[Indicators for Assessing Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices](https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/9789241596664/en/)

[Nutrition Humanitarian Needs Analysis Guidance](https://www.nutritioncluster.net/resource_NutHumanitarianAnalysis)

1. For example, see the Global Technical Assistance Mechanism’s [Nutrition information management, surveillance and monitoring in the context of COVID-19](https://www.nutritioncluster.net/resource_NISandCOVID19) briefs. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)