



The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into actions to end malnutrition

Country profile: Nigeria



Key statisticsⁱ

- **32.9%** of children under five are stunted
- **7.2%** of children under five are wasted
- **67%** of the population have access to at least basic drinking water services
- **33%** of the population have access to at least basic sanitation services
- **13%** of the population have access to basic hygiene

Background

Nigeria has made some progress but is yet to meet the World Health Assembly's targets for under-five stunting, wasting and anaemia. Nigeria is both a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership, and pledged six commitments at the 2014 SWA High Level Meeting to tackle issues in delivering sustainable water and sanitation services.

The federal Government has several relevant policies and plans, including the national water sector roadmap, which was approved in 2016 with long-term targets meant to be achieved by 2030. At present, the National Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition is being reviewed. This action is led by the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning and all relevant actors are involved in the process, including the Federal Ministry of Water Resources. The aim of the review is to clarify the roles all actors are to play in implementing the National Policy on Food and Nutrition and reaching the global targets in the reduction of malnutrition.

Ministries, Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations have initiated the process of reviewing and harmonising existing water supply and sanitation policies at federal level. The essence of this process is to produce a single policy that would provide effective coordination in programme delivery to achieve Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 while promoting health, nutrition and other services.

Is water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) integrated within national nutrition plans?

National Strategic Plan of Action for Nutrition (2014–2019) – Health Sector Component

The plan provides an overview of priority interventions and directions for food and nutrition policy in the health sector. It recognises that direct nutrition interventions need to be coordinated with complementary actions to address underlying determinants of good nutrition, and water and sanitation are acknowledged as one of the sectors important to this. Although different nutrition interventions are stipulated in the plan, only behaviour change communication interventions in the community include water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) priorities such as promoting handwashing with soap and sanitation. In terms of institutional structures, the Ministry of Budget and National Planning is responsible for bringing together various government ministries and departments, including the Federal Ministry of Water Resources.

National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria (2016)

This policy acknowledges that nutrition is a multi-sectoral issue, but doesn't explicitly mention WASH as an underlying factor. Although WASH is not included in the objectives, the policy does include some WASH interventions, including handwashing, proper waste disposal and community-led total sanitation (CLTS). It also includes a target relating to increasing access to potable water. Its institutional arrangements appear to have some cross-sectoral integration, as the Federal Ministry of Water Resources forms part of the National Council on Nutrition – the highest decision-making body on food and nutrition in Nigeria.

Is nutrition integrated within national WASH plans?

Executive Summary of the Nigeria Water Sector Roadmap (2011)

This roadmap provides an overview for the water sector in Nigeria, but is silent on hygiene and nutrition. It acknowledges only briefly that reforms in the water resource sector are integral for the Government to end stunted growth. The policy document focuses on agriculture and irrigation as ways to improve food security, but does not directly link them to nutrition. It states that the Government will work across ministries to scale up sanitation, including the Federal Ministry of Health, but it does not mention the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, who produced the National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria (2016). However, the irrigation component of this roadmap is slated to be developed in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture.

Immediate and Long Term Strategies for the Water Sector (Water Resources Roadmap, 2016–2030)

This plan, which was approved in June 2016, supports the sustainable development of the water and food security sector. It recognises the support

needed from all ministries in achieving the goal of the plan, including the Federal Ministry of Health, Budget and National Planning. It mentions a national multi-sector programme 'Partnership for Expanded Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (PEWASH)' which is aimed at improving water supply and eradicating open defecation in the country. Developing a national irrigation programme and strengthening the river basin authorities are seen as opportunities to boost food production as well as food security. In spite of this, the plan does not acknowledge the role of WASH in combatting malnutrition.

National Water Resources Policy and Strategy (2016)

This policy was approved in 2016 as a companion to the Water Resources Roadmap to serve as a statement of the immediate priorities of the federal Government in the water resources sector. The role of water and sanitation in nutrition or any aim/plan to tackle malnutrition is not directly stated in the document. However, in terms of the prioritised use of water, irrigation/drainage is considered a third-level priority after the higher primacy of ensuring water sources meet stream flow requirement and the municipal use of water. Water for irrigation is also mentioned as one of the seven key policy statements with the goal of utilising such water to enhance food production. In terms of the governance mechanisms in the policy, the Federal Ministries of Health and agriculture are also part of the National Council of Water Resources, which is charged with leading on coordination, legislation and policy affecting the water resource sector in Nigeria.

Recommendations for the Government of Nigeria

- WASH should be integrated within the overall objectives of the national nutrition plan, along with targets on sanitation, hygiene and water.
- The proposed activities within the national nutrition plan could be made more holistic through the integration of specific WASH interventions such as BabyWASH interventions (e.g. hygienic complementary feeding and clean and protected eating spaces for babies and children).
- While the Federal Ministry of Water Resources has been somewhat included within nutrition governance and decision-making, there is a need to include representatives of sanitation and hygiene at the national level.
- In all the policies reviewed, hygiene remains a critical gap that should be addressed due to its importance in optimising the benefits of nutrition and access to water and sanitation. Prioritising hygiene explicitly in the policies and incorporating nutrition-sensitive interventions in water sector policies would help in addressing this gap.
- We welcome the current review of the National Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition led by the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, and the inclusion of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources within this process. The review must fulfil its aim to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all actors in implementing the National Policy on Food and Nutrition to reach the global targets for reduction of malnutrition.
- We welcome the process now underway to review and harmonise existing

water supply and sanitation policies at federal level. The aim of this is to produce a policy that would provide effective coordination to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. This single, harmonised policy should include expanding the leadership remit of the National Council on Water Resources to coordinate WASH planning and programmes aimed at resolving nutrition challenges through increased access to safely managed water and sanitation services and good hygiene for all Nigerians.

Recommendations for all national governments

- Ensure policies align with the SDGs and their interconnected targets to strengthen WASH and nutrition coordination and collaboration, using opportunities such as policy reviews and joint sector reviews.
- Establish effective cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms championed at the highest level by heads of state, to support sharing of information and joint planning and implementation of policies.
- Ensure cross-ministerial coordination structures incorporate meaningful participation of and consultation with civil society and affected communities.
- Ensure up-to-date national WASH and nutrition plans and progress reports are easily accessible online, to allow civil society to monitor progress and hold governments to account.

Nutrition policy-makers and practitioners should

- Prioritise nutrition-sensitive WASH interventions and include specific objectives to improve WASH within nutrition plans and policies. Clear entry points to integrate WASH and nutrition include: behaviour change promotion; improvement of provision of WASH in healthcare facilities and schools; and co-location of interventions to areas with lowest WASH access and highest prevalence of undernutrition.

WASH policy-makers and practitioners should

- Increase the 'nutrition-sensitivity' of policies and programmes, including by: targeting geographical areas where undernutrition is most prevalent; prioritising women and children; and including nutrition-relevant interventions, such as improving WASH in health and nutrition centres.

This country profile is drawn from the global report '*The recipe for success: How policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into action to end malnutrition*' produced by ACF, the SHARE Consortium and WaterAid. Read the full report at www.wateraid.org/recipeforsuccess

ⁱ To ensure consistency and cross-country comparability, we have used the most recent figures published by global monitoring reports. In some countries, more up-to-date national statistics are available. Nutrition statistics from UNICEF, WHO & World Bank Group (2017) *Levels and trends in child malnutrition*. Available at www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/jme_brochure2017.pdf?ua=1 WASH statistics from UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (2017) *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baselines*. Available at washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-launch-version1