



Technical Assistance Towards Accelerating AfDB  
Investment in Multi-sectoral Nutrition Programming:

**SHARING NTEAM'S EXPERIENCE  
AND LESSONS LEARNED**

February 2021



**Nourish Life**



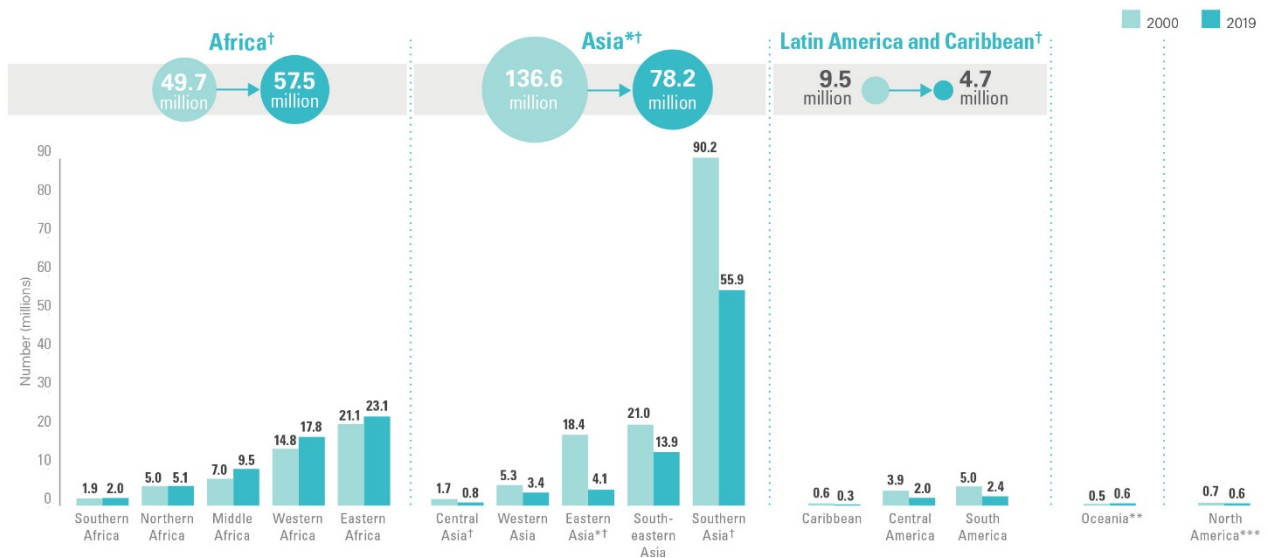
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# The Unrelenting Problem of Stunting in Africa

Africa bears a significant burden of malnutrition globally with two out of every five stunted children in the world living in the continent.<sup>1</sup> The recent data (2019) on child malnutrition<sup>2</sup> presents Africa as the only region in the world where cases of stunting among children have risen.

**FIGURE 1: Trends in the number (millions) of stunted children under 5, by United Nations region/sub-region, 2000 and 2019**




**Source:** UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group Joint Malnutrition Estimates: Key findings of the 2020 edition<sup>1</sup>

Childhood stunting also known as chronic malnutrition, results from in utero and early childhood undernutrition. Stunting is associated with increased morbidity and mortality, impaired child’s height, brain, cognitive development and productive capacity. The devastating life-long consequences on stunted children have deleterious effects on their families, community, and country.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/jme-2020-edition>

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, 2020



Several studies<sup>3</sup> have associated the prevalence of stunting to poor maternal health and nutrition, inadequate child feeding practices and dietary intake, and infectious diseases. These well-known causes are compounded by poor hygiene and sanitation conditions,<sup>4</sup> and many other determinants such as poverty.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the multiple factors associated with stunting, a commitment to well-coordinated and multi-sectoral action is an opportunity to improve nutrition. This commitment is in line with the objectives of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement initiatives. The SUN movement is committed to accelerate nutrition and stunting reduction with priority focus on multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral efforts at the highest government level. In addition, this commitment requires a clear vision, ambitious goals as well as an accountability framework that enables effective monitoring and impact measurement.

## Opportunity for Nutrition Action

### THE BANKING ON NUTRITION (BON) PARTNERSHIP

In 2016, the African Development Bank (AfDB) President, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina launched the Banking on Nutrition (BoN) Partnership to leverage the AfDB's influence and make an impact on nutrition in Africa. Through the initiative, Dr. Adesina hoped to harness “grey matter infrastructure” to catalyze nutrition smart investments and support stunting reduction in Africa—thus unlocking Africa's human and economic potential.

*Investing in physical infrastructure cannot help Africa to move forward without building brainpower. “Grey Matter Infrastructure” entails addressing nutrition challenges particularly during the first 1,000 days for healthy children-brain and cognitive development.*


– DR. AKINWUMI ADESINA, AfDB PRESIDENT

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<sup>3</sup> The 2008 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition

<sup>4</sup> Ngure FM, Reid BM, Humphrey JH, Mbuya MN, Pelto G, Stoltzfus RJ. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), environmental enteropathy, nutrition, and early child development: Making the links. *Ann N Y Acad Sci.* 2014; 1308 (1): 118-28

<sup>5</sup> Cetthakrikul, N., Topothai, C., Suphanchaimat, R. et al. Childhood stunting in Thailand: when prolonged breastfeeding interacts with household poverty. *BMC Pediatr* 18, 395 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-018-1375-5>



Two years later, the AfDB launched the [Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan \(MNAP 2018-2025\)](#), (MNAP), which defined AfDB’s goal to support the continent in achieving 40 percent stunting reduction by 2030 through investments on nutrition smart projects across the five key sector portfolios.

Through the MNAP, the AfDB established its vision, strategic priorities and actions for nutrition, and committed to scaling up AfDB investments in nutrition smart projects particularly in the five sectors that account for over 30 percent of government spending in Africa—**agriculture, social protection, health, water and sanitation (WASH) and education**. AfDB has a vision on improving nutrition for healthy children, families, and economies as a means of achieving prosperity and sustainable development in Africa.

*“Nutrition Smart Projects” and “Nutrition Smart Investments” are projects or development investments that can deliver a greater social and economic return as well as achieving nutrition impact, thus representing a double win for the AfDB and its member countries.*


The plan to increase the proportion of AfDB’s multi-sectoral nutrition programming and nutrition smart investments aligns well with the AfDB’s corporate goal to contribute to the stunting reduction in Africa.

In January 2019, the BoN Partnership—through the generous funding and support from Big Win Philanthropy and the Aliko Dangote Foundation—requested technical assistance (TA) delivery from Nutrition International’s Nutrition Technical Assistance Mechanism (NTEAM) to support the operationalization of the AfDB’s MNAP and to strengthen in-house capacity on nutrition smart investments within the organization.

## Value-added Technical Assistance

Effective implementation of the AfDB MNAP requires high-quality technical support to accelerate nutrition integration into the AfDB’s investments across priority sectors. In addition, the project team requires technical guidance to design and implement evidence-based and cost-effective multi-sectoral nutrition interventions with appropriate core sector and project level nutrition indicators for monitoring nutrition progress.

NTEAM leads a team of global experts with extensive experience in multi-sectoral nutrition, knowledge translation and nutrition monitoring and evaluation (M&E), as well as expertise in managing nutrition projects and initiatives, and designing high impact and cost-effective nutrition interventions at the global, country and regional levels.



NTEAM core areas of competence include:

- Technical assistance to countries
- Technical support to development partners
- Institutional capacity building
- Knowledge translation and eLearning

The overarching purpose of NTEAM’s technical support to the MNAP operations was to equip AfDB project task managers with the necessary **knowledge and skills to design, manage and track nutrition smart investments** as part of the AfDB’s project portfolio.


Over the course of 19 months, NTEAM delivered expert TA support that enabled AfDB to increase integration of nutrition into its portfolio and pipeline through an active commitment and engagement with the BoN partners. The TA delivery was centred on motivation, practical training tailored specifically to the AfDB’s portfolio across sectors, and planning for sustainability of nutrition smart investments at the AfDB. NTEAM implemented a responsive, transparent, and standardized project management process to ensure the TA project remained on track and on budget.

In September 2020, NTEAM successfully completed the first two phases of TA activities and deliverables. This document summarizes NTEAM’s experience and the results achieved in this project.

## Context-Driven Approach: Technical Assistance to Strengthen AfDB’s Nutrition Capacity

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first approach adopted for strengthening AfDB’s internal capacity on nutrition was a comprehensive needs assessment on the prevailing situation in AfDB. Working closely with the BoN and AfDB staff, NTEAM conducted a systematic situational assessment to inform its context-specific TA delivery. NTEAM assessed the institutional capacity building requirements and the AfDB’s M&E systems to identify opportunities and develop effective training in delivering support on nutrition integration. The situational assessment took place at the AfDB headquarters in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, and two regional offices (South Africa Regional Office in Pretoria and East Africa Regional Office in Nairobi).



Findings from the situational assessments included:

- Perception of “mainstreaming fatigue” and apprehensions on nutrition integration among Task Managers
- Limited understanding of what nutrition smart investments meant across AfDB sector's portfolio
- Limited awareness about the AfDB’s MNAP and its commitments to nutrition
- Need for customized multi-sectoral toolkits and a nutrition marker tailored specifically for AfDB

### **DEMYSTIFICATION OF TERMS**

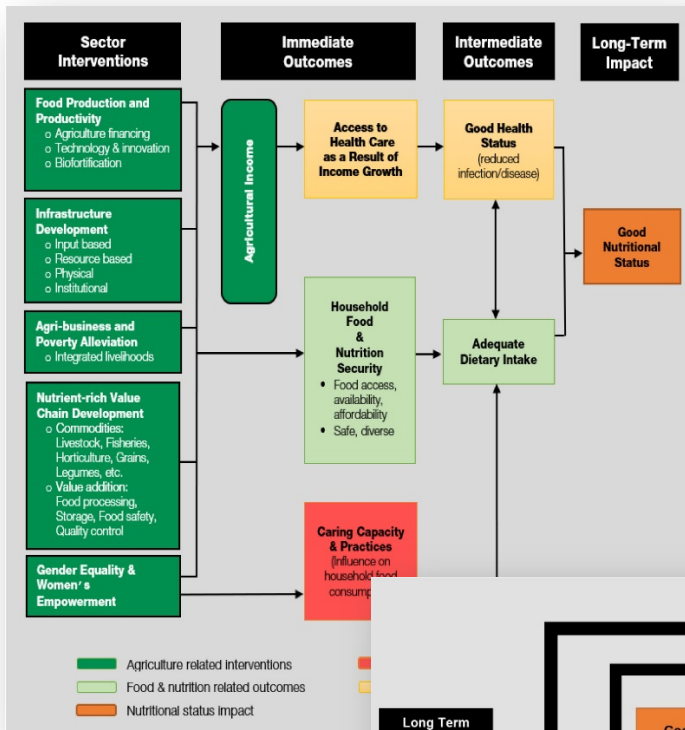
According to the situational assessment, the concept of “mainstreaming” engendered both fatigue and misconceptions at AfDB, and it stifled interest in nutrition among Task Managers, Economists and Sector Managers. To facilitate motivation and change of mindset, NTEAM included demystification of the terms “nutrition integration” and “nutrition mainstreaming” in the staff training.

The perception of mainstreaming at AfDB was associated to the fear of nutrition becoming compulsory and having to add more content to every strategy and project documents as a cross-cutting issue (i.e. gender, climate change, job creation). This TA promoted a switch from using the term “nutrition mainstreaming” to using the term “nutrition integration instead. "Nutrition integration" was clearly defined as a suite of adjustments from subtle to significant changes that could be applied to the design of the AfDB's traditional projects or programs to make them nutrition smart. This term was used throughout the TA delivery.

### **IMPACT PATHWAYS FOR NUTRITION**

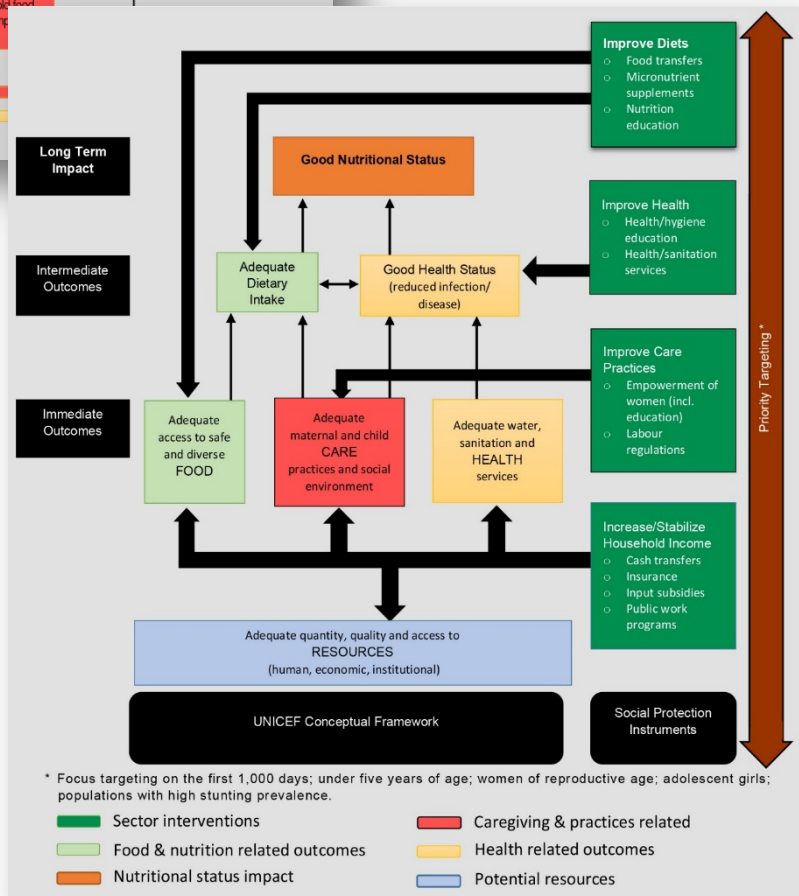
An integrated impact pathway was created for AfDB’s five priority sectors to illustrate the theory of change and entry points for the Bank's traditional projects or programs to become nutrition smart. The various impact pathways present examples of high impact, cost-effective nutrition interventions for achieving improved nutrition outcomes by implementing nutrition smart projects. Details on the five sectors impact pathways are available in the Sector Briefs found on the AfDB Website and through Nutrition International’s Learning Centre.

## Impact pathways from agriculture to nutrition



Source: Created for AfDB Nutrition Smart Agriculture Projects (Nutrition International, 2019)

## Impact pathways from social protection to nutrition



\* Focus targeting on the first 1,000 days; under five years of age; women of reproductive age; adolescent girls; populations with high stunting prevalence.

Source: Created for AfDB Nutrition Smart Social Protection Projects (Nutrition International, 2019) (Adapted from Technical Paper on Nutrition and Social Protection, FAO, 2015)



## WHAT NUTRITION SMART PROGRAMMING MEANS FOR AfDB

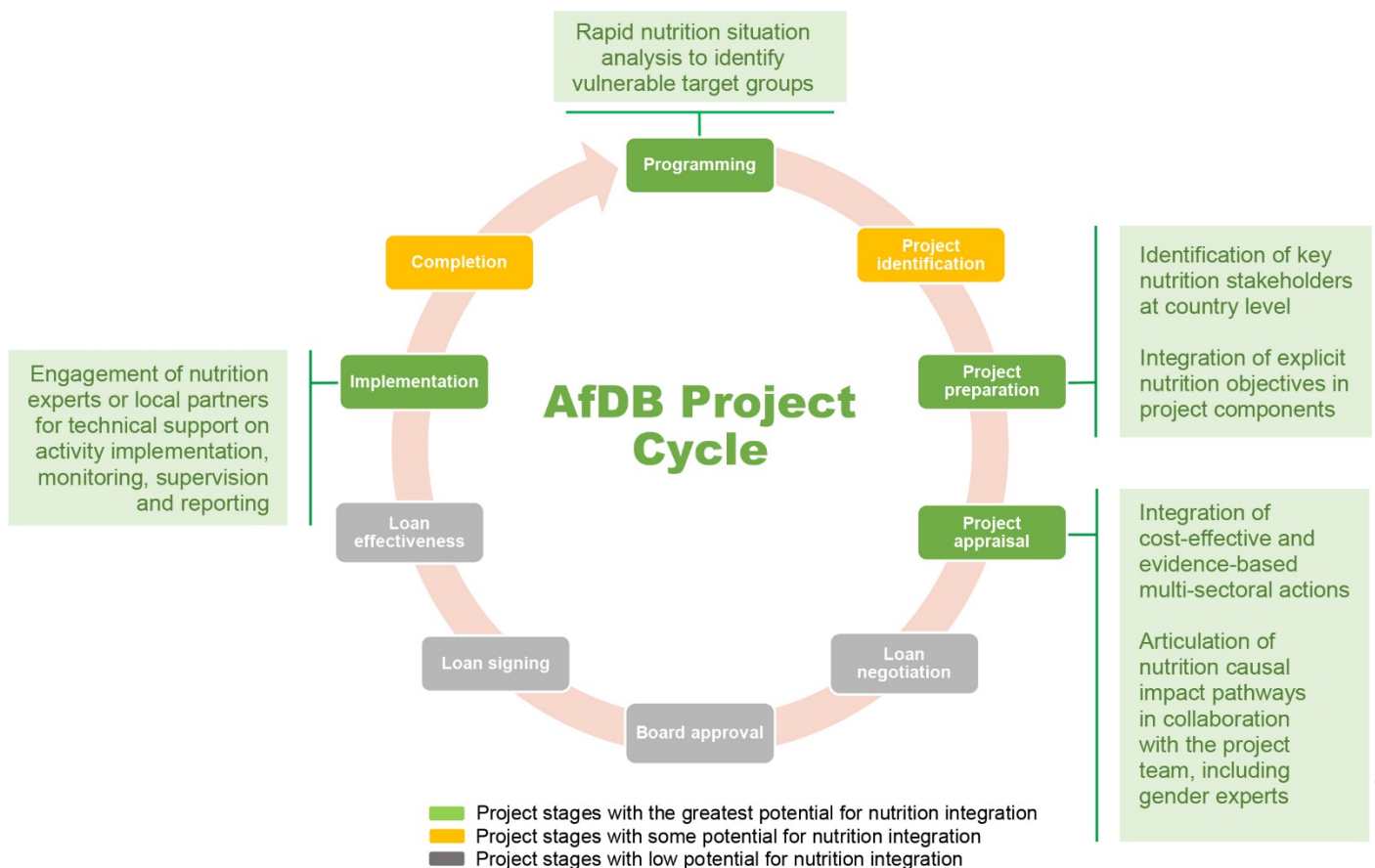
Designing the Bank’s projects to be nutrition smart will enable them to deliver a greater social and economic return while achieving nutrition impact at the same time. This represents a double win for AfDB and its regional member countries. AfDB’s nutrition smart projects integrate evidence-based interventions such as promotion of nutrient-dense and diverse agricultural production and consumption; access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion; nutrition training in higher education; and nutrition smart health systems.

In addition, these interventions target the underlying determinants of foetal and child nutrition and development—food security, adequate caregiving resources at the maternal, household and community levels, as well as access to health services and a safe and hygienic environment—and incorporate specific nutrition actions.

Building on the unique AfDB program structure and operational models, NTEAM seamlessly aligned nutrition smart investments within the specific context of the AfDB project cycle.

NTEAM identified key entry points and opportunities for nutrition integration at the different stages of AfDB’s project cycle—from country programming to project completion and post evaluation. Figure 7 illustrates the project stages with greatest potential for nutrition.

**FIGURE 2: Opportunities for nutrition in AfDB project cycle**



## NUTRITION-GENDER NEXUS IN TA DELIVERY

Building on Nutrition International's Gender Equality and Nutrition Strategy, NTEAM integrated gender issues in the planning and implementation of this TA delivery to support gender equality and equity in AfDB nutrition smart investments.

NTEAM liaised closely with the AfDB's Gender Advisor to ensure that TA delivery was aligned with AfDB policies and strategies on gender. Specifically, the development of tools used for the situational assessment and the creation of the AfDB multi-sectoral nutrition toolkit as well as the preparation of a nutrition annex during project design incorporated gender considerations. Furthermore, the TA supported the incorporation of sex-disaggregated nutrition indicators in the Project Appraisal Reports (PAR) and during peer review of AfDB project and strategic documents.



**FIGURE 3: Nutrition International team at the nutrition sensitization event**

## NUTRITION SENSITIZATION AND AWARENESS EVENT

The need assessment underscored the importance of raising awareness of the great opportunity and role of the AfDB towards improving nutrition in Africa. Improved awareness was key to motivating project team members to work towards the AfDB's stunting reduction goals. The situational assessment noted that a paradigm shift was required to achieve nutrition integration in AfDB portfolio of projects.

To increase awareness and catalyze the paradigm shift, NTEAM planned and delivered a [nutrition sensitization event](#), which was held on June 24, 2019. Held at the AfDB's headquarters in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, the event marked the beginning of the AfDB's capacity building campaign."

#### AfDB Nutrition Awareness Media Resources

- **Video 1:** Capacity Building for Nutrition at the African Development Bank: What to Expect in the Training
- **Video 2:** Nutrition Smart Investments in the Agriculture Sector: A Multi-national Example from the Sahel
- **Video 3:** Nutrition Smart Investments in the WASH Sector: An Example from Gambia
- **Video 4:** The African Development Bank's Commitment to Nutrition
- **Video 5:** Nutrition Smart Investments in the Health Sector: An Example from Sudan
- **Video 6:** Invest in "Grey Matter Infrastructure"



## WORKPLACE NUTRITION RESOURCES

To create further nutrition awareness among AfDB staff, NTEAM collaborated with an on-site nutritionist to develop a package of nutrition resources for the AfDB workplace. Five different resources now support workplace breastfeeding, healthy eating tips, and guidance to those who arrange food services for AfDB meetings and events.

### Nutrition in the Workplace & Healthy Eating

- Investing in Workplace Nutrition Programmes at AfDB
- Healthy Eating at Work (PPT)
- Developing a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (PPT)
- Tips for Managing Your Portion Sizes
- Reducing Your Consumption of Highly Processed Foods

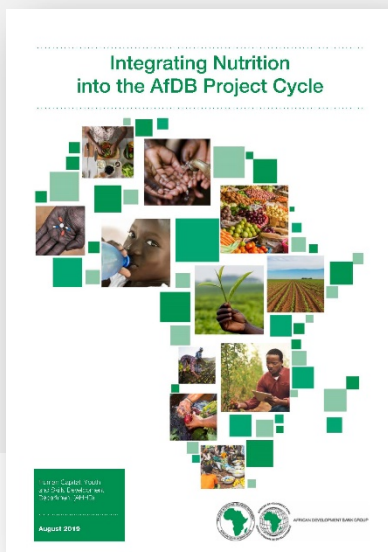


## BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH FOCUSED NUTRITION WORKSHOPS AT REGIONAL HUBS

In addition to the awareness campaign, NTEAM organized and implemented three in-person staff workshops at the AfDB regional hubs (East Africa, South Africa, and West and Central Africa). The training workshop, entitled: “Integrating nutrition in African Development Bank (AfDB) investments,” focused on why and how to integrate nutrition, using the toolkits and guidance developed, ensuring a hands-on experience. External partners with related experience in multi-sectoral nutrition programming (such as World Food Programme) were invited and shared their own experiences and engaged in peer learning and networking across agencies.

Practical exercises on real life cases were used to foster the buy-in on nutrition integration among the project team and task managers. The workshops included case studies for group exercises. These case studies were selected from AfDB project documents, specifically from the country projects in each respective region. Using the tools and guidance prepared for the AfDB, participants had opportunity to apply the new information to real life situations. Interestingly, the post-workshop evaluation recorded inspiring feedback from the project Task Managers who had initially expressed concern about adding nutrition integration to their already heavy workload. During the group exercises, some of the Task Managers identified opportunities for nutrition in their ongoing projects and projects under design. This served the dual purpose of training staff in nutrition integration and demonstrating the level of effort and time it would take to do so.

### Training Materials for Staff Training Workshop



- Refresher Training for AfDB Task Managers (PPT)
- Integrating Nutrition in AfDB Projects and CSPs (PPT)
- Situation Analysis: The Foundation for a Nutrition Smart Approach (PPT)
- Incentive Mechanisms for AfDB Nutrition Smart Investments (PPT)

## CUSTOMIZATION OF NUTRITION RESOURCES FOR AfDB MULTI-SECTORAL PROGRAMMING

Recognizing the existing nutrition resources already developed by related agencies and nutrition actors, NTEAM adapted the available relevant materials to support the AfDB's unique operational context.

NTEAM developed a fully customized and user-friendly multi-sectoral nutrition toolkit to equip the AfDB project teams to design nutrition smart projects and manage nutrition smart investments. The "AfDB Nutrition Marker" was developed as a practical tool to guide project teams in the integration of key nutrition features to make projects nutrition smart.

All customized resources were presented to Task Managers during regional nutrition workshops. An online survey administered to AfDB staff (including regional workshop participants) a year after the workshop revealed encouraging feedback on the usefulness of the multi-sectoral toolkit. Task Managers reported that they found the customized toolkit very helpful in reviewing and preparing project documents and Country Strategy Papers (CSP).

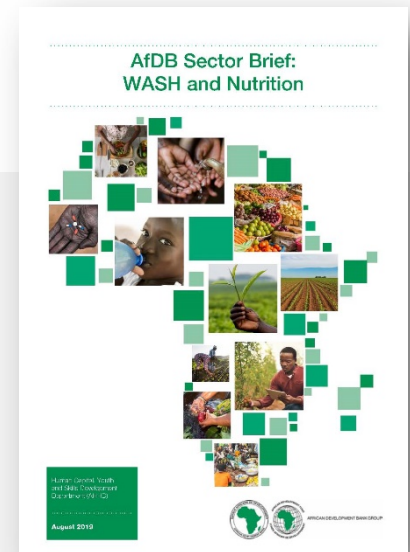
### Overall Guidance on Nutrition Smart Investments

- AfDB Nutrition Marker and Project Checklist
- Guidance on Integrating Nutrition in AfDB Investments
- Snapshot of Food Security and Nutrition in Africa
- Integrating Nutrition into Country Strategy Papers
- Integrating Nutrition in the Project Cycle
- Nutrition Smart Investments at the African Development Bank
- Snapshots of AfDB Nutrition Smart Projects
- AfDB COVID-19 Response in Africa: Prioritizing Nutrition
- Public Works Programmes for AfDB Nutrition Smart Investments
- Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers for AfDB Nutrition Smart Investments
- Disbursement-linked Indicators for AfDB Nutrition Smart Investments



### Sector Brief and Guidance

- AfDB Sector Brief: Agriculture and Nutrition
- AfDB Sector Brief: WASH and Nutrition
- AfDB Sector Brief: Health Systems and Nutrition
- AfDB Sector Brief: Higher Education and Nutrition
- AfDB Sector Brief: Social Protection and Nutrition



To better support staff capacity building, NTEAM curated these nutrition resources for easy access by AfDB staff on their internal learning system. To enable quick access by partners and stakeholders working in multi-sectoral nutrition, these resource have been made available externally on the [AfDB Website](#) and through Nutrition International's [Learning Centre](#).

### DIRECT TECHNICAL SUPPORT IN DESIGNING NUTRITION SMART PROJECTS

As well as providing expert TA in building capacity among AfDB staff, NTEAM also provided on-site and virtual technical support to help accelerate the integration of nutrition into AfDB nutrition smart projects across the five priority sectors.

NTEAM provided TA at the different stages of AfDB project design including participation in design missions and provision of technical guidance at different stages of the AfDB project design, such as project preparation, project appraisal, programming and project peer review process.

Specific technical guidance was provided to:

- CSPs and corporate documents
- AfDB country investment projects in Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Central Africa Republic, Côte D'Ivoire, Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sudan
- AfDB regional and multi-national investment programs
- The AfDB COVID-19 response program at national and regional levels

Technical guidance provided to the project teams included subtle changes to their project designs, such as the project's targeting criteria, to increase its benefits to a nutritionally vulnerable population. Other changes included priority focus on high impact and evidence-based nutrition actions as well as streamlining project partnership through a multi-sectoral approach to create multiple nutrition interventions.

## MONITORING AND TRACKING AfDB'S SECTORAL NUTRITION INVESTMENT TARGETS

As part of this TA project, NTEAM supported the AfDB in creating an interactive nutrition dashboard to strengthen internal capacity on tracking its nutrition smart investments.

The AfDB nutrition dashboard monitors and reports on the AfDB's MNAP performance targets on a regular basis. It tracks AfDB funding on nutrition smart projects across sectors, countries and years. In addition, the dashboard enables easy visualization of nutrition features that have been integrated in the nutrition smart projects.

To support AfDB staff and nutrition dashboard administrators, NTEAM provided training, and developed technical materials and videos on how to use the interactive tool.

### AfDB Nutrition Dashboard

- AfDB Nutrition Dashboard - Interactive Dashboard
- AfDB Nutrition Dashboard - Admin Guides (Document and Video)
- AfDB Nutrition Dashboard - User Guides (Document and Video)
- AfDB Nutrition Dashboard - Training Material for Managing User Access (PPT)
- AfDB Nutrition Dashboard - Training Material for Inputting Data and Review Process (PPT)
- AfDB Nutrition Dashboard- Training Material for Dashboard Users (PPT)

FIGURE 4: The AfDB interactive nutrition dashboard

**Welcome to the African Development Bank Nutrition Dashboard**

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

[About the Dashboard](#)

[Description of Data](#)

[User Guide](#)

[Results Overview](#)

[Nutrition Scorecard](#)

[Variables Description](#)

[Need help? Contact us here](#)

Human Capital, Youth and Skills Development Department (AHHD)  
June 2020

Big Win Philanthropy | Aliko Dangote Foundation | NUTRITION INTERACT | salanga

NOTICE: The data are preliminary and need to undergo a review by the AfDB. No information currently presented on this dashboard is to be published, or used for any external purpose.





## Effective Technical Partnership: Experiences and Learnings

**Adaptability and agility** are very important in providing technical support to development programs. NTEAM was ready, responsive and agile in providing quality TA and in adapting to any changes requested by the AfDB to support its nutrition agenda. For example, NTEAM promptly adapted and leveraged the possible opportunities in promoting AfDB nutrition smart investments during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the AfDB has a remarkable record of nutrition smart COVID-19 response projects and programs to help curb the COVID-19 pandemic across the African continent.

**Effective partnership engagement** cannot be overemphasized in achieving standardized results. Throughout its technical support, NTEAM was dedicated to fostering an active collaboration with AfDB and the partners. The BoN partners remained fully engaged in the project implementation, technical review process, and development of project deliverables. NTEAM effectively leveraged Nutrition International's in-house expertise to coordinate quality assurance and access to the many technical skillsets required for standardization of TA delivery in a multi-sectoral nutrition programming.

**A focus on sustainability** is key for effective TA delivery to development programs. NTEAM adopted an approach on developing AfDB internal and institutional capacity to foster sustainability of the TA delivery so that it continues past the duration of the TA support. This approach included the preparation of handover plans for AfDB nutrition dashboard, and recommended actions to mitigate potential risks and issues that may arise upon the completion of the technical support provision. Also, given the very significant dedicated roles and responsibilities of AfDB staff, NTEAM prepared a focused orientation program for a newly recruited AfDB Senior Nutrition Officer to facilitate continuation of momentum in nutrition smart investments in AfDB.

NTEAM's recommendations for sustainability included:

- Establish a pool of technical experts to support AfDB nutrition staff in provision of technical guidance to the project teams and task managers at the country and regional levels.
- Create a plan for periodic communication to showcase accomplishments and progress against MNAP targets, highlighting AfDB leadership on nutrition integration.
- Initiate a continuous regular training and refresher training schedule on nutrition integration for task managers, use the refresher training module that NTEAM created to promote the usage of the AfDB multi-sectoral nutrition toolkit.



## Acknowledgements

Nutrition International would like to thank the Banking on Nutrition (BoN) Partnership for the opportunity to contribute to their important work. The BoN Partnership is an initiative of the African Development Bank (AfDB), undertaken with the support of Aliko Dangote Foundation and Big Win Philanthropy and with technical assistance provided by Nutrition International (Canada).

Operationalization of the MNAP was overseen by AfDB's AHHD, with Babatunde Olumide Omilola (Manager, Public Health, Security and Nutrition Division) leading, and support from Maimouna Diop Ly (Chief Health and Social Protection Officer). Adetokunbo Oshin (Big Win Philanthropy) and Francis Aminu (Aliko Dangote Foundation) provided leadership on behalf of the other members of the Banking on Nutrition Partnership.

Technical assistance was provided through Nutrition International's NTEAM (Nutrition Technical Assistance Mechanism). NTEAM provided project design and oversight, program management, and the development of knowledge products. Marian Amaka Odenigbo (NTEAM Senior Advisor – Multi-Sectoral Nutrition) led technical guidance with inputs provided directly by Sergio Cooper Teixeira, Charlotte Dufour, Angela Kimani, Nigatu Regassa Gedani, Elvis Njabe Ngande, Wisdom Dube, Victoria Holla, Olivier Wouters, Abba Benhammouche, and the Salanga team who developed the nutrition dashboard: David Valenta and Paula Richardson.

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# NTEAM

NUTRITION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MECHANISM

## About NTEAM

Through its Nutrition Technical Assistance Mechanism (NTEAM), Nutrition International shares its expertise globally to support the scale-up of nutrition for the most vulnerable. We believe that knowledge, rigorously obtained and generously shared, is key to effective progress for nutrition. NTEAM provides timely and coordinated expert technical assistance to governments, multilateral organizations, development banks and other global nutrition actors. As a global expert ally, NTEAM promotes practical application of knowledge by translating technical information and research into accessible guidance, tools and capacity strengthening resources. Across all areas in which we work, we provide guidance, relevant and impactful technical assistance.

For more information on NTEAM, please visit [NutritionIntl.org/nteam](https://NutritionIntl.org/nteam)

For more information on the resources mentioned in this document, visit Nutrition International's AfDB Nutrition Resources website: [afdb-nutritionintl.talentlms.com/](https://afdb-nutritionintl.talentlms.com/)