



# Strengthening Results-Based Management for Nutrition in Burkina Faso

## Background

Malnutrition is a significant public health concern in Burkina Faso, and addressing its root causes requires the engagement of actors beyond those working in the health sector. The Government of Burkina Faso established policy guidance directing sector line ministries to work together to integrate nutrition into their work plans and budgets. The key documents that provide the policy framework for multi-sectoral nutrition coordination and implementation are the *National Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Policy 2020–2029* (*Politique nationale multisectorielle de nutrition 2020–2029*) and the five-year *Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategic Plan 2020–2024* (*Plan Stratégique Multisectoriel de Nutrition 2020–2024 [PSMN]*).

The overall objective of the PSMN is to improve the nutritional status of populations through the implementation of multi-sectoral interventions. Objectives and nutrition-related interventions for each sector have been identified under five strategic areas: reducing undernutrition; reducing micronutrient deficiencies; strengthening the fight against overweight/obesity and nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases; strengthening food safety; and improving nutrition governance. However, none of the sectors or

regional directorates in USAID Advancing Nutrition’s geographic focus areas had undertaken a process to integrate the proposed activities into their work plans. In these regions, sector work plans included very few or no nutrition-related activities, making it very difficult to achieve the PSMN objectives by the end of 2024.

USAID Advancing Nutrition used a results-based management approach to strengthen the work that had already been started under the direction of the technical Secretariat for Multi-Sectoral Nutrition (*Secrétariat technique chargé de la multisectorialité pour la nutrition [ST/NUT]*). The RBM approach was selected to help sectors focus on the change they want to achieve, thereby facilitating the planning, execution, and monitoring of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities. In addition, the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene (*Ministère de la santé et de l’hygiène publique [MSHP]*) already uses RBM principles, providing an opportunity to build on this work by adapting the approach for multi-sectoral nutrition. This training also served as an opportunity to begin to orient key sector staff on the content of the PSMN and the importance of multi-sectoral coordination for improved nutrition while also strengthening their strategic planning skills.

### What is Results Based Management?

Many definitions of results based management (RBM) exist, but all focus on the achievement of results rather than completion of discreet activities.

RBM is a management strategy or method applied to an organization to ensure that its processes, products, and services contribute to the achievement of clearly defined results. This requires defining realistic results, monitoring progress in achieving expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions, and reporting performance.

## RBM Training Process

USAID Advancing Nutrition worked closely with a team of RBM expert trainers from the MSHP to revise the Ministry's existing RBM training package to make it suitable for use by other sectors and to emphasize the importance of multi-sectoral nutrition interventions within the training content. Key concepts covered in the updated training package included—

- core RBM principles
- results-based planning with a focus on constructing a good theory of change
- the link between the PSMN and sectors' work plans, planning assumptions, and risk mitigation
- monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Working with the training team from the MSHP, USAID Advancing Nutrition held two in-person training sessions on RBM, reaching 36 national and regional technical staff from six sectors to improve sector planning for nutrition (box 1). The regions targeted for this training were Center East, Center West, and South West, aligning with the geographic areas where USAID Advancing Nutrition is active in Burkina Faso. Participants worked individually and in groups to ensure their sector work plans were results-oriented and that activities supported shared nutrition outcomes. At the end of the training session, participants had revised their work plans to contain not only more nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific activities but also high-impact interventions focused on results with the most potential to improve progress on PSMN objectives.

## Assessing Impact

At the end of the training sessions, facilitators conducted an evaluation of the training modules. Participants were generally satisfied with module content and the training methodology used. One hundred percent of participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with both the content (27.8 percent very satisfied) and the training methodology used (52 percent very satisfied).

One year after the initial training, USAID Advancing Nutrition staff conducted a follow-up of trainees to assess the training's impact on sectoral planning and to find out if the level of nutrition-related interventions in sectoral plans had changed. USAID Advancing Nutrition staff developed an evaluation plan that focused on the usefulness of training content, suggestions for improvement, and trainees' ability to apply RBM skills to their daily work.

During the post-training follow-up visits, the evaluation team met with 27 of the 36 trainees, a participation rate of 75 percent. Absences were mainly due to a change of post or unavailability due to travel. In addition, two staff from the Nutrition Directorate (*Direction de la Nutrition*) and ST/NUT who had received the RBM training served as interviewers and were therefore not included among the follow-up respondents.

### Box 1. Key Sectors Supported

- Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene (*Ministère de la santé et de l'hygiène publique*)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Animal and Fishery Resources (*Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Animales et Halieutiques*)
- Ministry of Environment, and Energy, Water, and Sanitation (*Ministère de l'Environnement, de l'Energie, de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement*)
- Ministry of National Education, Literacy, and Promotion of National Languages (*Ministère de l'Education nationale, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues nationales*)
- Ministry of National Solidarity and Humanitarian Action (*Ministère de la Solidarité nationale et de l'action humanitaire*)
- Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization, and Security (*Ministère de l'Administration territoriale, de la décentralisation et de la sécurité*)

## Usefulness of Training Content and Suggested Improvements

The evaluation team asked trainees to assess the usefulness of the RBM training. For the purposes of the evaluation, we grouped the training content under three themes: results-based planning; monitoring, evaluation, and learning; and identifying assumptions and risks. All trainees (100 percent) found the modules on results-based planning and monitoring, evaluation, and learning to be useful or very useful. In comparison, only 84.9 percent of the trainees found the content on identifying assumptions and risks to be useful or very useful. When asked why this content was less useful, trainees explained that these concepts were new and not something they had used previously in their daily work.

*Monitoring allows us to ensure that planned activities are carried out in the field and identify where these activities have already been carried out effectively.”*

When asked for suggestions on how to improve the content, trainees proposed increasing the duration of the training to allow more time for each topic. The original training targeting technical staff took place over five days, but participants felt the training could be expanded to 10 or 14 days. Trainees also requested additional case studies on the formulation of outputs and outcomes as part of learning about the results chain and wanted more examples and exercises to illustrate these concepts and help them practice identifying appropriate indicators. Last, trainees proposed a larger emphasis on work plan development.

### Applying RBM Skills to Daily Work

Most trainees (73.1 percent) indicated that the RBM training helped them become more efficient in their work. For example, trainees indicated that the implementation of RBM principles improved teamwork and data collection and that the RBM training helped them improve activity monitoring in coordination with regional- and district-level nutrition focal points. Trainees also noted that they increased involvement of activity beneficiaries in planning and implementation, leading to enhanced results. When asked about work plans for 2022, all trainees noted that nutrition-specific and/or nutrition-sensitive

*We were able to reformulate activities to facilitate financing by certain technical and financial partners. We also reformulated the indicators to make them specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound.*

activities were included in their sector work plans and 74 percent of trainees indicated that these activities were funded. Although 2023 work planning was not yet complete at the time of our follow-up visits, more than half of the trainees (54 percent) stated that they were involved in the work planning process and 96 percent noted that work plan objectives had been written in such a way that would allow for adding nutrition-related activities under those objectives.

Through the follow-up visits, the main identified barrier to integrating more nutrition-related activities into sector work plans is the centralized planning process used by some sectors. For example, respondents noted the top-down program budget development process

as an obstacle to integrating more nutrition activities by trainees working in regional-level ministerial departments in sectors such as agriculture and livestock, water and sanitation, education, and economy and finance.

Another identified barrier relates to the individuals targeted for the first round of RBM training—technical staff, who typically serve as nutrition focal points in their various sectors. However, these staff members are not always directly involved in the final planning and budgeting processes at the regional level. This led to two challenges:

1. The trained staff members did not have a deep understanding of the budgeting process and how adjustments could be made to better incorporate nutrition-related activities.

2. Technical staff members' supervisors, who are more directly engaged in planning and budgeting processes, did not receive RBM training and therefore did not always support technical staff trying to apply new RBM skills.

Trainees had the perception that the types of nutrition-related activities outlined in the PSMN were rigid and could not be adapted and were therefore reluctant to further contextualize these suggested activities to fit their regional contexts, sector work plans, and budget considerations.

The USAID Advancing Nutrition team that conducted follow-up visits also noted that some trained staff members had transferred to other positions, either within the same directorate or in a new geographic area. Until a higher number of staff from across all regions are trained, this movement of trained staff members poses a barrier to the application of RBM skills within the targeted sectors.

*We were able to reformulate certain relevant activities to better advocate for their financing by the technical and financial partners.”*

## Applying Lessons from the Training Follow-Up

The USAID Advancing Nutrition team held a second round of training, this time focusing on national and regional-level directors who supervise previously trained technical staff. We chose these individuals because some of the earlier trainees experienced challenges when applying RBM skills due to a lack of awareness and support from their supervisors who have more control over the budgeting and planning processes.

*We are now able to set realistic targets, taking into account the resources available.”*

Although technical trainees involved in the first sessions suggested an increased training period, the USAID Advancing Nutrition team developed a shorter, three-day version for directors who have greater demands on their time. The director training included instruction from Ministry of Finance

representatives to clarify the budgeting and planning processes and ensure regional directorates understood how to integrate nutrition-related activities into sector work plans and budgets to more closely align with PSMN objectives.

## Conclusions and Way Forward

The follow-up visits with trainees showed that the RBM training content was useful but that the training package targeting technical staff needs adjustments to ensure future trainees could make the most of their new skills.

*Results based management allows us to focus on the change we want to achieve, which will facilitate the execution of activities.*

Going forward, the USAID Advancing Nutrition team recommends always holding an orientation for department directors before training any technical staff to ensure that department managers and supervisors will support technical staff members' application of new skills. If possible, department managers should also receive a shortened version of the training to help increase their buy-in and commitment to new concepts and procedures.

The training scope also should be expanded, with support from the existing pool of national MSHP RBM trainers and regional trainers based in Center East, Center West, and South West regions, to include all regions and more staff from within sector departments and directorates. This will help reduce the impact of staff transfers.

We will make the final RBM training modules on the National Nutrition Information Platform to ensure they are available for future use by nutrition stakeholders, such as government and implementing partners.



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