

Establish scope and mandate

Why is this important for MSPs?

In the process of understanding the context for an MSP and making the decision that an MSP is required, it is important to explicitly clarify the reasons why the MSP is needed, and from this to **clarify the MSP's scope and mandate**. It is important to be sure that the planned MSP is a viable option and serves a clear purpose. Stakeholders will only be interested in and motivated to engage in the MSP if they understand why it would be useful and how it would benefit their interests as well as be useful for advancing nutrition in general. Over time, these reasons may evolve and change, but at the start, there needs to be enough clarity to spark engagement.

The scope of the MSP will set the boundaries for the MSP, and the mandate will help to start to think about its vision. For example, a clear mandate during early stages – such as coordinating how nutrition is integrated into ministerial portfolios – can help make strategic use of information and financing to integrate nutrition into a broad range of programmes and sectors within the government. However, it can happen that the scope of the MSP becomes so wide that little is achieved, so it is best to let the context assessment guide a defined mandate for the initial stages of the MSP, which can then grow and evolve if necessary to match a bigger vision. Another risk is that poorly defined expectations at the start can be a major source of conflict later on in the process.

Having a clear understanding of the reasons of being for the MSP will have implications for how it is set-up, structured and facilitated. Only a few stakeholders will be involved in answering these questions, as it is impossible for everyone to be involved in all aspects (see Establish a steering group).

Once it is decided, it will be important to communicate it clearly to all concerned (see Build and Build and maintain stakeholder support and Outline the process). Stakeholders need to have some understanding of how broad or narrow the agenda will be, as this will be important to build and maintain their commitment, and can have an impact on the MSP's legitimacy.

The **scope and mandate of the MSP will be set by defining key areas**: the mandate, authority, and decision-making powers of the MSP; the type and number of stakeholders to engage; geographical scope; funding sources; and its main functions. Key questions that can help facilitate the process are:

- Is it clear why an MSP is being set up, and are key stakeholders in agreement?
- What are the short and long-term interests of the MSP?
- What is the scope of the work that the MSP wants to do in the short and long term?
- Under what auspices or authority is the MSP being established?
- Is there any legal backing for the MSP, or is it enshrined in policy?
- Is it linked to a formal government process? Is it a voluntary process by the stakeholders?
- Have leaders been identified? Who are the key stakeholders that will drive or undermine the initiative?

Visioning can help MSPs agree on the scope and mandate. This tool is usually done after the [problem](#) and [situation analysis](#) has been completed (see Situation analysis) and before the detailed [planning](#) and [decision making process](#) with the involved stakeholders (see Develop detailed action plans). It starts with the question: "What do we want to see in place in 5–10 years as a result of this MSP?" After reviewing the context, individuals brainstorm vision elements, which are shared, clustered, and named. Eventually all the elements are

combined in one vision sentence. The vision will provide a basis on which to develop the goal and purpose of the MSP.

Once you have decided on the scope and mandate of the MSP, a partnering agreement may be developed to avoid misunderstanding. This is not usually a contract, rather this is an agreement developed between stakeholders as equals. It outlines their agreement to cooperate, and states explicitly the interests and roles of each stakeholder.

How does this work in practice?

In **Guatemala**, the President decided that the MSP would become a piece of legislation, establishing the scope and mandate as a law. In 2005, Guatemala passed the National System for Food and Nutrition Security (SINASAN) law. The legal framework reflects the different geographical levels food and nutrition security will engage in, the structures and processes and the stakeholders roles and responsibilities.

In **Nepal**, on the other hand, sectoral reviews were conducted and strategies were revised for each of these sectors with the larger aim of integration within the MSP. This led the MSP to lay down the action points for each of the ministry towards the achievement of eight outputs as outlined in the country's nutrition policy. This helped enable a collective vision and shared understanding at the national level.

In **Chad**, however, a preliminary multi-stakeholder platform for nutrition was set up initially by the National Centre for Nutrition and Food Technology (CNNTA), which is the government's operational body for nutrition, with the support of Renewed Efforts against Child Hunger and Malnutrition (REACH). The purpose was to assess the nutrition situation and develop a nutrition policy. The process was accelerated with a new team at CNNTA who hired a consultant to develop the National Nutrition and Food Policy and the Inter-sectoral Nutrition and Food Action Plan.