Formal and informal

Why is this important for MSPs?

The influence of MSPs is strongly linked to the formal and informal networks that predate the MSP or are shaped by the evolution of the MSP. **Formal relationships** or networks refer to the structured and institutionalised processes that inform stakeholder interaction. These may be meetings, submission of quarterly reports, etc. (see Decide on a structure and MSP process). **Informal interactions or networks** rest on interpersonal relations between different actors and usually exist outside of these formal structures (see Deepen understanding and trust).

Both of these ways of working are therefore vital to successful MSPs. It is necessary to acknowledge the roles of different people and how their commitment, choices and actions affect the MSP, just as much as it is important to have clear and accountable structures and systems set up for formal interactions. Different priority will be placed on formal and informal networks, and on the role of systems or informal ways of working, in different contexts.

How does this work in practice?

Developing formal norms for inter-organisational interaction: El Salvador has strengthened the coordination of actions at national, departmental and municipal levels. The National Food and Nutritional Security Council (CONASAN) has developed a **multi-sectoral territorialisation model** of the National Food and Nutritional Security Policy, forming departmental, municipal and community committees. In 2015 CONASAN installed the first FSN Departmental Council, (CODESAN) in Chalatenango and 12 FSN Municipal Councils (COMUSAN) in areas of high prevalence of stunting. Both CODESAN and COMUSAN provide a

‘dialogue space for coordination of intersectoral strategic partnerships at the departmental and local level’.

Identifying pre-existing networks: **In Hanguranketha division (Sri Lanka)** collaboration was reported to be more effective because of the informal ties and relationships of trust that have been formed amongst various stakeholders (such as the local level bureaucrats, health officers, agriculture officers). These informal relationships have helped to address any differences or conflict of interests that may arise during the planning and implementation of nutrition programmes.