

Roles of MSPs

Nutrition is multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder

If you're reading this toolkit, you know that **malnutrition is a complex policy challenge**. This is because it is caused by complex interactions between factors as varied as household access to safe, nutritious food; child caring practices; water, sanitation and hygiene; gender equality; and access to health services. While the precise mix of the various physical, biological, social and political determinants of malnutrition might vary among countries (and also among different populations within each country), the **need to develop a multisectoral response** remains equally valid for all.

Of course, no single agency, or individual officer, will have access to the knowledge and resources needed to be able to tackle all these determinants of malnutrition. Bringing together the insights, abilities and resources from multiple sectors is likely to result in more effective action for nutrition. The challenge is how to achieve this coordination in a way that works in a particular context. This is the rationale for an MSP: to **bring together the multiple sectors and multiple stakeholders into a single platform, to work together for nutrition**.

Once the rationale for a multisector approach is established, what remains to be discussed is how to devise an MSP in a way that is effective for the problem at hand, acceptable to most stakeholders involved, and likely to be sustained in the long term. Within its broad role of bringing sectors and stakeholders together, the agreed function of an MSP will inform the structure and process that the MSP will take. **A**

successful MSP is defined as one that can bring relevant people together into a shared space; maintain itself functioning over time; and achieve actions related to its defined goal. To be successful, an MSP should address multiple levels of institutional, financial, political and disciplinary barriers, which requires a clarity of vision and lots of commitment from all involved.