

Nutrition Stakeholders in India: Insights From a Network and Influence Mapping Exercise

OBJECTIVES

To better understand the landscape of and links among actors involved in influencing program and policy decisions in nutrition in India, a team from POSHAN conducted a stakeholder network mapping exercise. The team used Net-Map¹; which is a participatory interview tool that combines social network analysis, stakeholder mapping, and power mapping. The tool is intended to help visualize and understand situations in which many different actors influence particular outcomes. Net-Map allows stakeholders to examine not only the formal interactions in a network, but also the informal interactions that cannot be understood by merely studying documents concerning the formal policymaking procedures.

METHODOLOGY

With the goal of mapping the actor landscape for nutrition at the national level, three Net-Map group exercises were held in New Delhi, India, from January 30 to February 1, 2012. The interviewee group included about 40 participants from a range of organizations who had a long history of working in the field of nutrition in India and thus a comprehensive knowledge of the landscape.

In each Net-Map interview, respondents were led through a facilitated process that aimed to identify and map the actors who play a role in shaping maternal and child nutrition policy and program decisions at the national level in India. Exhibit 1

shows the complete list of actors identified in the Net-Map exercise. Interview participants listed institutions or individuals that play a role, explained why they were important, specified how they engaged in the network, and assessed the degree of influence each has in the network. Interviews focused specifically on the use of advocacy and technical information as means of engaging in or influencing policy and program decisions in nutrition.

The data from the three group exercises was combined and analyzed using a social network analysis program to generate a network map of the actors. The rich discussions during the interviews were summarized to identify insights related to the use of evidence in policy and program decisions. Results² are presented in Exhibit 2.

FINDINGS

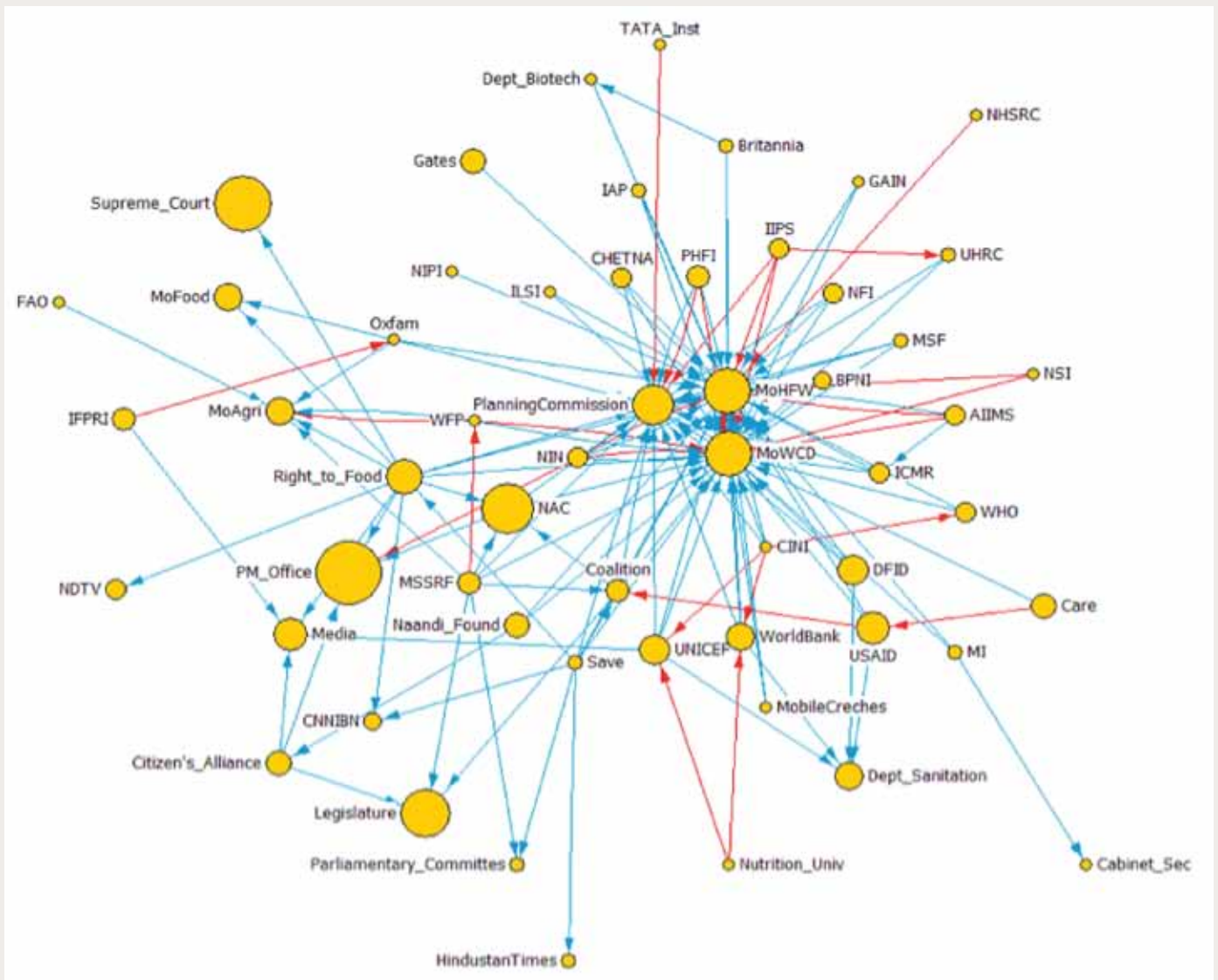
The network of nutrition actors in India is dominated by a few organizations that largely receive information from others in the network.

There are 56 actors at the national level working in a highly centralized network, which a few actors dominate. Exhibit 2 depicts the links to and from the 10 most influential actors in the stakeholder landscape. The actors with the most in-links are the core actors, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), with 35 and 34 in-links, respectively, followed by the Planning

EXHIBIT 1 List of actors identified in the Net-Map exercise

Actors	Full name
AIIMS	All India Institute of Medical Sciences
BPNI	Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India
Britannia	Britannia Industries Limited
Cabinet_Sec	Cabinet Secretary
Care	Care
CHETNA	Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action
CINI	Child In Need Institute
Citizen's_Alliance	Citizen's Alliance against Malnutrition
CNN-IBN	Cable News Network-India Broadcast News
Coalition	The Nutrition Coalition
Dept_Biotech	Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology
Dept_Sanitation	Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (formerly the Department of drinking Water and Sanitation, MoRD)
DFID	UK Department for International Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
Gates	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
HindustanTimes	Hindustan Times
IAP	Indian Academy of Pediatrics
ICMR	Indian Council of Medical Research
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institution
IIPS	International Institute for Population Sciences
ILSI	International Life Sciences Institute
Legislature	Legislature
Media	Media
MI	Micronutrient Initiative
MoAgri	Ministry of Agriculture
MobileCreches	Mobile Creches
MoFood	Department of Food & Public Distribution of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
MSSRF	M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Naandi_Found	Naandi Foundation
NAC	National Advisory Council
NDTV	NDTV India
NFI	National Foundation for India
NHSRC	National Health Systems Resource Centre
NIN	National Institute of Nutrition
NIPI	Norway - India Partnership Initiative
NSI	Nutrition Society of India
Nutrition_Univ	Universities with nutrition departments
Oxfam	Oxfam
Parliamentary_Committees	Parliamentary Committees
PHFI	Public Health Foundation of India
PlanningCommission	Planning Commission
PM_Office	Prime Minister's Office
Right_to_Food	Right to Food Campaign
Save	Save the Children
Supreme_Court	Supreme Court
TATA_Inst	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
UHRC	Urban Health Resource Centre
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WorldBank	World Bank

EXHIBIT 2 Relationship among actors in the nutrition landscape at the national level



Source: Authors 2013.

Note: Each circle on the map reflects the actors involved in nutrition in India at the national level. The size of the circle for each actor on the map depicts their perceived relative influence in relation to policy and program decisions about maternal and child nutrition. Blue links denote advocacy using technical information and red links denote sharing of technical information, without advocacy.

Commission with 21 in-links. The actors with the greatest number of in-links appear to receive information from others, which suggests that others want to influence them.

Some highly influential actors, such as the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister's Office, the National Advisory Council, and the Legislature, are not highly connected or central in the network. This indicates that the broader nutrition community may not

easily access some of the important decisionmakers or influencers.

Technical evidence plays some role in influencing policy decisions, but there appears to be a substantial disconnect between research-generating organizations and policymakers.

Respondents were able to identify some key evidence-generating organizations, which included the National Institute of Nutrition, the Indian

Council for Medical Research, universities with nutrition departments, the Indian Institute of Population Sciences, Child In Need Institute, and the Micronutrient Initiative. Participants also saw the International Food Policy Research Institution and M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation as strong research organizations, although not explicitly in maternal and child nutrition. Interviewees saw the Coalition for Sustainable Nutrition Security in India as a strong source of evidence-based consensus documents that reflect the views of its members and explicitly focuses on maternal and child nutrition.

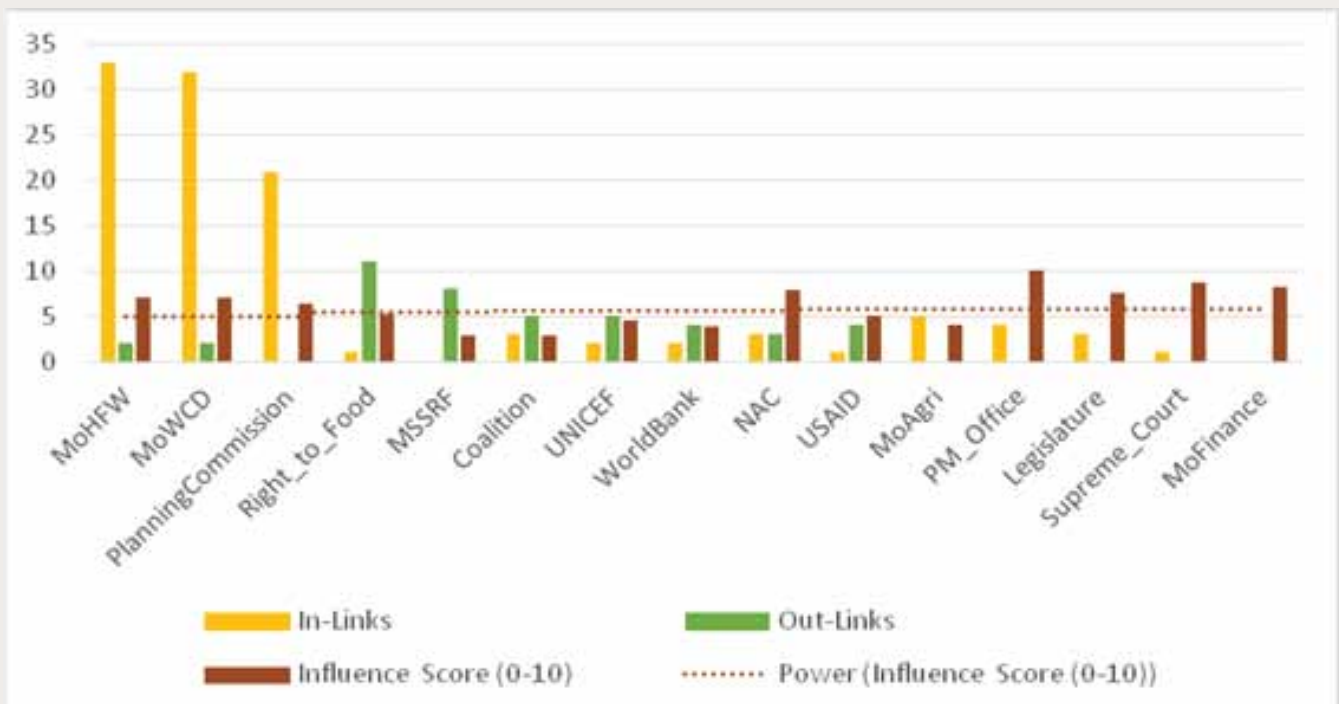
Some interviewees felt that there was a substantial disconnect between research-generating organizations and policymakers in nutrition. They also noted that there was currently no public demand for improving nutrition and little awareness of nutrition-related challenges among legislators. Some felt that a concerted awareness-raising campaign was necessary, while others saw a need for the evidence-producing organizations to focus

more explicitly on advocacy to ensure that evidence was considered more deeply in decisionmaking. It was noted, however, that technical evidence played some role in influencing policy decisions, although interviewees were not clear on how much of a role.

There is a need for better advocacy around the issue of undernutrition among policymakers and the overall public.

Interviewees identified the lack of both public awareness and a unified set of messages as key barriers for improving maternal and child nutrition. Undernutrition was also described as an “invisible” challenge, of which the public and policymakers must be made more aware. Participants suggested that given the many voices targeting the national-level decisionmakers on this issue, harmonized messages are essential. As such, actors focused on delivering consensus-driven information, such as the Coalition for Sustainable Nutrition Security in India, and broad-based movements, such as the Right

EXHIBIT 3 Influence of and links among actors in the nutrition landscape



Source: Authors 2013.



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to Food Campaign, could be critical to positively shaping nutrition policy.

CONCLUSION

The stakeholder mapping exercise yielded critical insights about the breadth of the nutrition actors in India and revealed the central roles and high influence of two ministries and the Planning Commission in nutrition policy and program decisions. The diversity of actors, especially those targeting decisionmaking bodies with advocacy and

information suggests a greater need for consensus building around nutrition.

NOTES

1. Read more about the Net-Map Toolbox <http://netmap.wordpress.com/about/>
2. These results reflect the common knowledge, opinions perceptions of a broad range of knowledgeable nutrition-focused interviewees. They are presented as a snapshot of the important and commonly perceived interactions and roles in the network, rather than a decisive complete map of all the actors, their links and influence.

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Vikas Samvad

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ABOUT POSHAN

Partnerships and Opportunities to Strengthen and Harmonize Actions for Nutrition in India (POSHAN) is a 4-year initiative that aims to build evidence on effective actions for nutrition and support the use of evidence in decisionmaking. It is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and led by IFPRI in India.

ABOUT RESEARCH NOTES

Research Notes summarize the latest findings from POSHAN-led studies.

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