Position vacant: Technical Expert on data management, platforms and analysis

Summary

The Agrinatura EEIG is seeking a technical expert in database management with experience of statistical analysis to join a Global Support Facility (GSF) (based at the headquarters of Agropolis International in Montpellier, France) for National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) that will be implemented in several developing countries hit by malnutrition, in Africa and Asia, in the framework of a European programme.

The Technical Expert will demonstrate skills and experience relevant to nutrition data collection, management, analysis, presentation and utilisation; as well as an understanding of the current status of needs and gaps in data on nutrition at both global and national levels. S/he will have at least a Master's level degree in a discipline related to food and nutrition or data for monitoring and information, with at least five years experience in data collection, data management, statistical analysis or information systems and platforms; as well as experience in capacity development.

The Technical Expert will act as an advisor to the GSF Team Leader and to the country teams on all aspects of data management, data platforms, data security and access to data. The person will provide expert assistance in all activities including the drafting of guidelines and capacity building material. S/he will also undertake short-term in-country assignments related to the organisation and management of data and closely supervise and guide the work of contracted short-term experts.

The position is open from the 2nd of November until mid-July 2019. Applicants should send their *curriculum vitae* and a letter of application explaining why they are suitable for the position to gsf_nipn@agropolis.fr by the 30th of September 2015. Pre-selected candidates will be interviewed during week 41 (between 5th and 9th of October).

Background

The European Commission (EC) is launching an ambitious programme to fight malnutrition in the developing countries affected by this burden. The objective of this programme is to contribute to the global reduction in the incidence of stunting in alignment with target set for 2025 by the World Health Assembly and in support of the commitments of the EU Nutrition Action Plan. Through this programme, the EC will support the establishment of National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPNs) in ten or so developing countries in Africa and Asia which have expressed an interest in embarking in such a programme. The NIPN initiative is conceived as an approach to assist countries to strengthen their capacity to make use of existing national nutrition information to its full potential, geared to each individual country's needs and capacity. This requires strong cooperation with governments.

The NIPN approach is fundamentally to strengthen national capacity to manage, analyse, interpret and use information to contribute to making decisions about effective nutrition actions through informed policies, programmes and allocating resources. This requires monitoring changes in indicators over time as well as information concerning investments and projects related to nutrition and the association between the two. The NIPN approach is conceptually close to a surveillance system and is based on continuous observation, with the district as the putative unit of analysis. This allows a detailed picture to be generated of the overall nutrition situation in a country whilst also permitting comparisons and the assessment of changes over time. Such comparisons may allow an assessment of the effectiveness of programmes or interventions implemented within countries.

A country's objectives in establishing an NIPN will vary, and might include: early warning; policy planning; programme monitoring; programme evaluation; advocacy; the role of nutrition within different sectors; mobilisation of communities; mobilisation of government and politicians; research etc. To ensure ownership and sustainability the NIPN will be a country-driven process and will:

- Maximise the analysis and interpretation of existing national and sub-national data relevant to nutrition;
- Identify critical nutrition information gaps and how to fill them;
- Monitor national and sub-national progress in reducing the prevalence of undernutrition;
- Estimate the association between changes in undernutrition and financial investments in nutrition, both domestic and international;
- Build plausible arguments about the cost-effectiveness of interventions, programmes and approaches to reduce and prevent undernutrition;
- Strengthen the national and international accountability of government and donor stakeholders primarily in meeting commitments made.

The heart of the NIPN is a live database, which, once set up, is continuously updated and analysed, in order to feed into country programmes and priorities. Such a database will be established in each country. The NIPN database will contain data of at least 4 types: existing information systems, periodic surveys, intervention-monitoring systems, and resource-tracking systems. Depending on the country, additional elements may need to be introduced such as new data collection systems to fill critical gaps, most likely around assessing the strength of implementation of programmes with nutritional outcome. Analysis of the database would produce reports on the implementation process, on results, and on specific studies where these are available, etc. These reports would be used to inform policy makers and to give feedback to donors and other stakeholders involved in nutrition programmes and nutrition data collection.

The process for establishing a NIPN at the country level can be divided into the following steps:

1. Securing the agreement of all stakeholders relevant to the NIPN: those who collect and control data; those who make policy and programme decisions; those who fund these activities; and defining with countries the main objectives they want to achieve.

2. Identifying the availability of existing data sources as well as data gaps that might be filled, either by enhancing existing data streams or by developing new data collection streams that are feasible to sustain over time.

3. Applying data procedures that will improve and then maintain the quality of routine information sources. These quality assessment and control procedures will also be applied to any new data that are needed.

4. Organising and assembling data into a database that allows contextualized cross-sectoral analysis by district, if that level of data is available.

5. Building local monitoring and evaluation capacity among stakeholders to analyse, interpret, apply NIPN data to its sources for assessment, planning and decision-making purposes, as well as to enhance capacity to maintain and grow the NIPN.

Realistically, most countries interested in the NIPN will require some level of support to enable the system to function reliably: capacity building, reinforcement of information systems, designing interventions specifically to reduce undernutrition, setting up monitoring systems for those interventions, etc. Alongside these country-level steps, support will be needed to ensure coordination and orchestration of the work between countries. Therefore a mechanism is needed to organise international support to countries whilst relying as much as possible on national and regional technical bodies. The Global Support Facility (GSF) will thus be the technical assistance component to support, at country level, the design, establishment and coordination of the NIPNs. The GSF Core Team will be based in Montpellier and will be composed of 4 people: a team leader and two technical experts assisted by one bilingual (English/French) administrative manager. The GSF Core Team will also benefit from support with logistics, administration and finances from the host organization, Agropolis International in Montpellier. Whenever necessary the GSF Core Team will also seek support from a pool of short-term experts from the Agrinatura network who will be mobilized according to the needs identified in specific countries.

Global missions of the GSF Core Team

- Support the design and implementation of the NIPN in selected countries.
- Provide technical assistance to the national EU delegations and partner institutions relevant to establishing NIPNs.
- Ensure effective coordination, information-sharing, communication and advocacy of the global NIPN approach, and ensure coherence with related initiatives such as SUN, GNR, etc.

The GSF will be accountable to the Stakeholder Group which the EC will establish, comprising representatives from funding agencies, international organisations involved in nutrition issues, partner countries and civil society organisations. The GSF will also be advised by an Expert Group which will provide advisory support and oversight as well as guidance on quality assurance, and comprise representatives of related initiatives and programmes. The GSF Core Team will work under the responsibility of Chair of Agropolis International, who will act as project director.

Required qualifications and skills

- At least Master level degrees in disciplines related to food and nutrition or data for monitoring & information.
- Have at least 5 years successful experience in data collection and/or management information systems.
- Have at least 5 years successful experience in capacity development, including providing practical training and support, development of training matter and training delivery and/or project management.
- Be familiar with the latest developments in the field of nutrition, including national and international policies and latest international developments, institutional arrangements, initiatives and strategies in the field of nutrition (including governance issues) in particular in relation to Data for Nutrition.
- Have a good knowledge of EC development cooperation programmes, especially in the field of nutrition (more than 2 years of experience ideally).
- Have excellent drafting and oral presentation skills in either English or French, with competence in the other. Other language skills (Portuguese, Spanish) could be a plus.