

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS



SMART 2021
YEAR IN REVIEW



MESSAGE
FROM
DIRECTOR

SMART
SURVEYS
ACROSS ASIA
AND AFRICA

LOCAL CAPACITY
BUILDING OF
SMART SURVEY
MANAGERS

SMART +
THE FUTURE OF
SMART



**INSIDE THIS
EDITION**

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

The year 2021 has indeed been an extraordinary year albeit with its many challenges. Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented regression which further exacerbated the already dire effects of climate change, conflict and deteriorating socio-economic crisis. The pandemic specifically had a detrimental effect on the small gains made towards combating the problem of malnutrition with an estimated 149 million children under 5 years of age suffering from stunting and 45 million suffering from wasting in 2021.

The SMART Initiative continues to be a strong and strategic pillar in the fight against hunger and malnutrition in the world. Adaptation was the keyword for many in the sector since the first announcement of a global pandemic. Since 2020, the SMART Initiative was at the forefront of critical methodological adjustments to adapt to the ongoing pandemic and mitigate the increasing hunger crisis. Navigating within a 'new normal' context while safeguarding our people and the communities we work in, was one of our top priorities.

Innovate and grow was the theme for the initiative in 2021. The Initiative has spearheaded innovative solutions like SMART+, Risk Monitoring Framework, MUAC screening tool and SMART virtual training. These are meant to increase capacity and facilitate high-quality, reliable and timely nutrition and mortality data to inform decision making. Geographically, the Initiative expanded to support more complex emergencies like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Myanmar, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, and Ethiopia to name a few. New technical collaborations were further strengthened with Integrated Phase Classification, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the Global Technical Alliance.

This success would of course not be possible without the generous support of our donors (USAID, SIDA, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada) and the continued support of our partners like UNICEF, Global Nutrition Cluster, World Food Program, Integrated Phase Classification, International and national NGOs and most importantly the respective government agencies in all the countries where we operate and where SMART surveys are conducted.

I would like to give thanks and gratitude to our staff for their strong commitment to our mandate and for being agile in challenging times. Reflecting on our most memorable moments in 2021, we are proud of our achievements and look forward to our planned activities and innovative solutions in-store in 2022.



Hassan Ali Ahmed
Associate Director of Nutrition
Global Lead for SMART Initiative

In 2021, the SMART Initiative provided technical support for the implementation of SMART surveys across Asia and Africa while adhering to the recommended **SMART COVID 19 survey guidelines**. SMART surveys are widely used as a standardized survey methodology to assess the nutritional status and mortality rate of a public health situation.

This methodology has demonstrated the delivery of accurate and reliable data necessary for governments and partners alike for their decision-making. It has proven to also be applicable and adaptable to both humanitarian and development contexts. The year kicked off by collaborating with local and international partners including both Action Against Hunger Pakistan and World Food Programme (WFP), to provide technical support in the implementation of 8 SMART surveys in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

The shared results contributed to the 2021 **IPC Acute Malnutrition Analysis report** which revealed that over 600,000 children were affected by acute malnutrition and outlined recommendations for action to the critical situation in Sindh province. This was followed by technical support in the implementation of SMART surveys in Mozambique, Bangladesh, Angola, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and Myanmar, to name a few.

SMART SURVEYS ACROSS ASIA AND AFRICA





LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING OF SMART SURVEY MANAGERS

The SMART initiative deliberately and successfully prioritized building local capacity, sustainability, ownership and institutionalization of the methodology. The SMART initiative supported capacity-building in different regions and several countries, including Yemen, Ethiopia, and Sudan. The team trained a total of 311 survey managers from different affiliations including government authorities, academia, local and international agencies. Almost 70 percent of the trainees were nationals of the host countries where the trainings took place.

Several trainings were held in Ethiopia to expand the pool of SMART survey managers available to support survey implementation across the country. To further strengthen capacity, a national sensitization workshop attended by 96 Nutrition Information Systems experts was conducted on the updated MUAC tool and Rapid SMART surveys in Addis Ababa.

The year ended off with the SMART initiative facilitating two rounds of survey manager trainings in Khartoum, Sudan with the plan to lead over 20 SMART surveys in 2022.

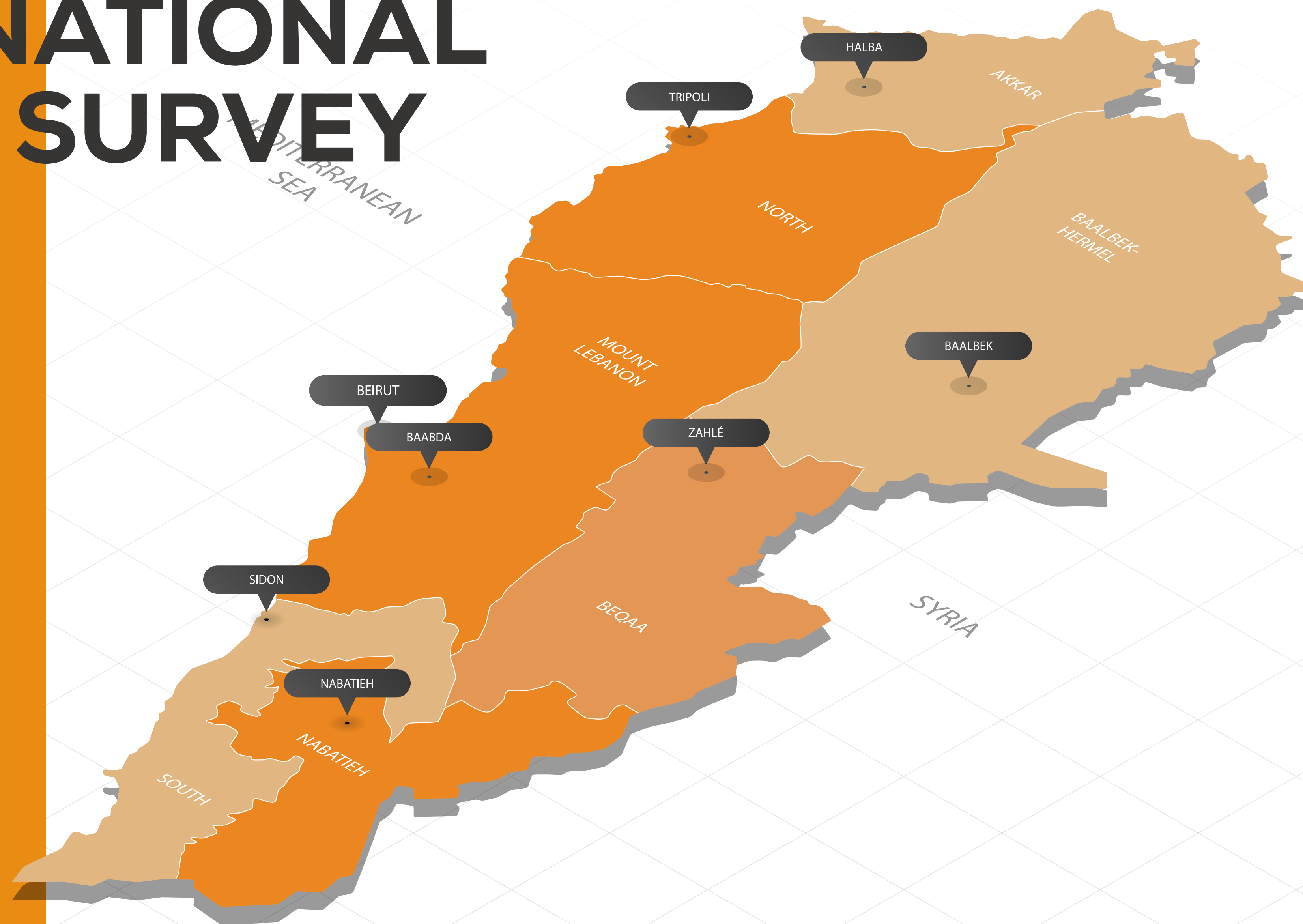


LEBANON NATIONAL NUTRITION SURVEY

The SMART initiative also supported the first national SMART survey in Lebanon, in response to the growing humanitarian crisis. Grappling with a socio-economic emergency further aggravated by COVID-19, Lebanon faced a food, health, and nutrition emergency situation.

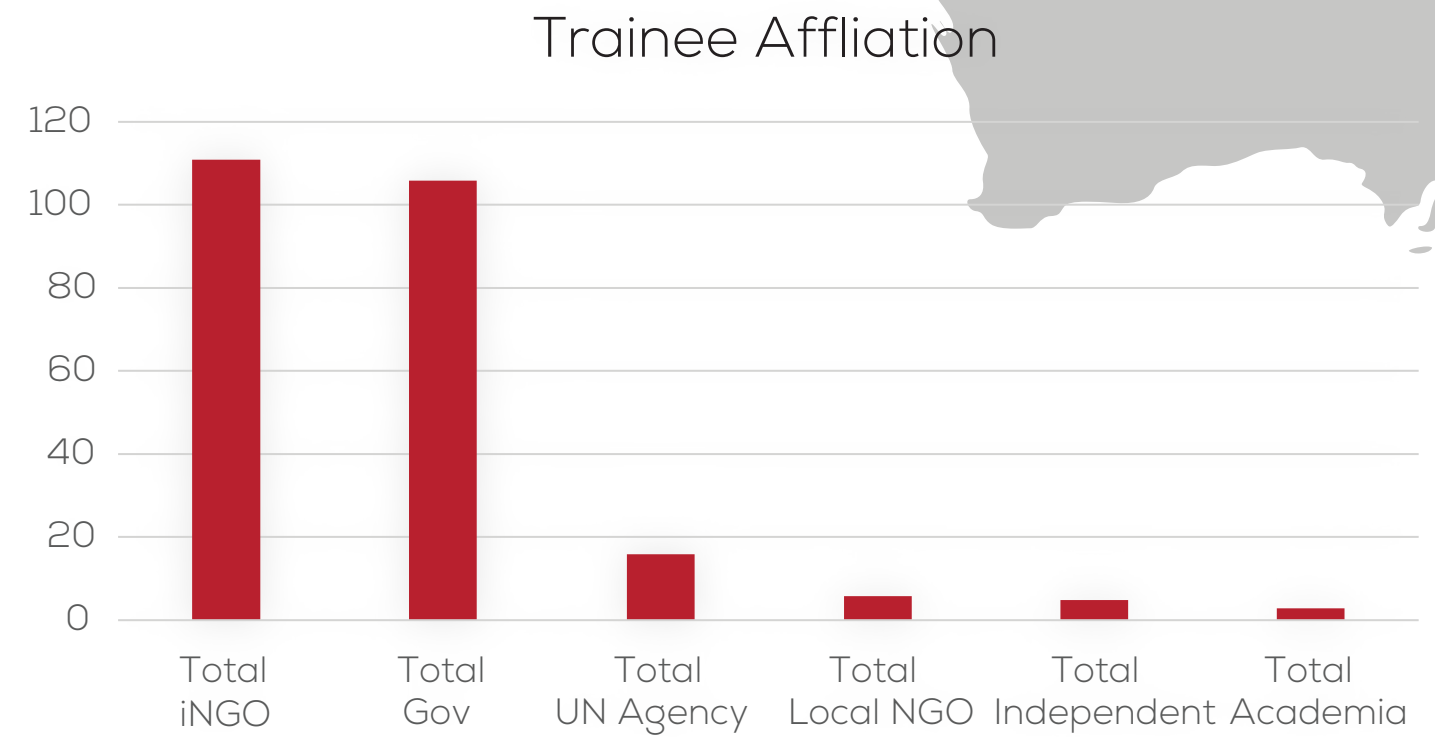
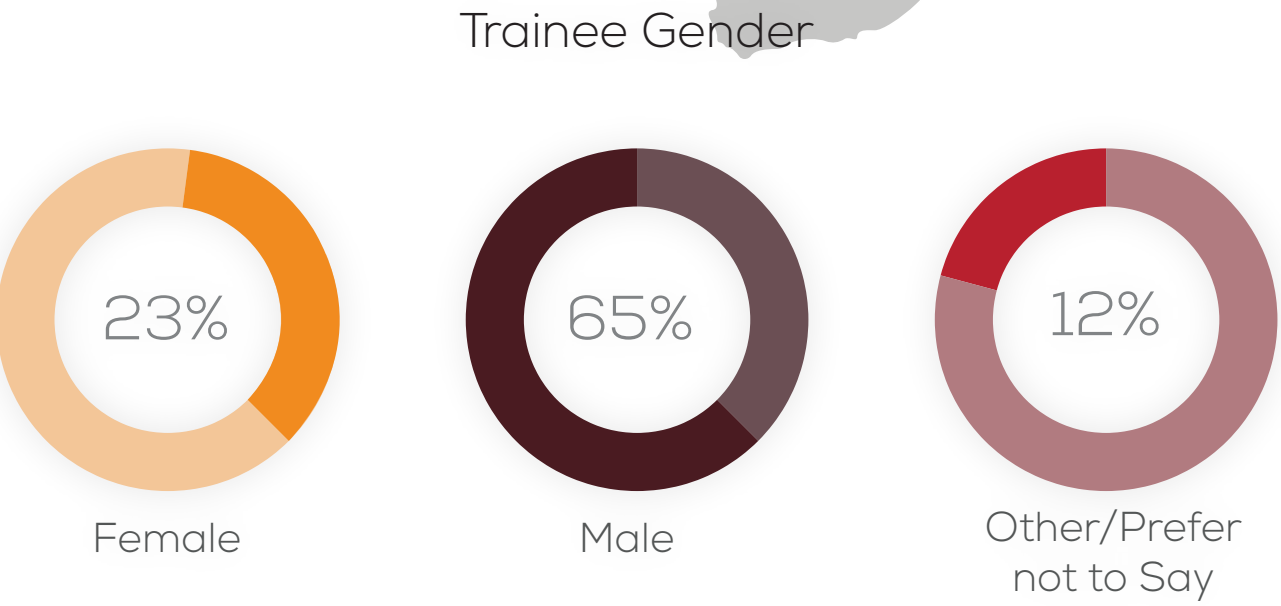
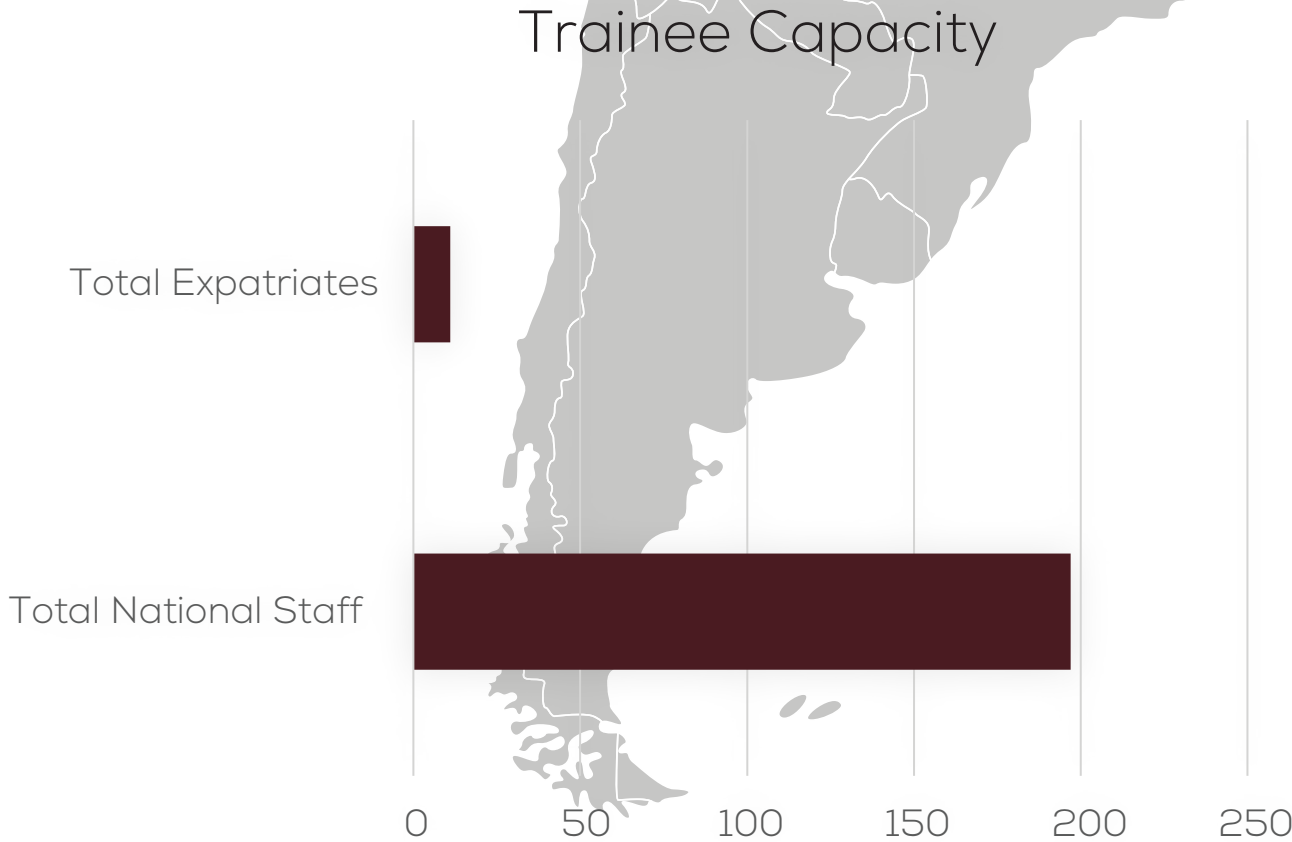
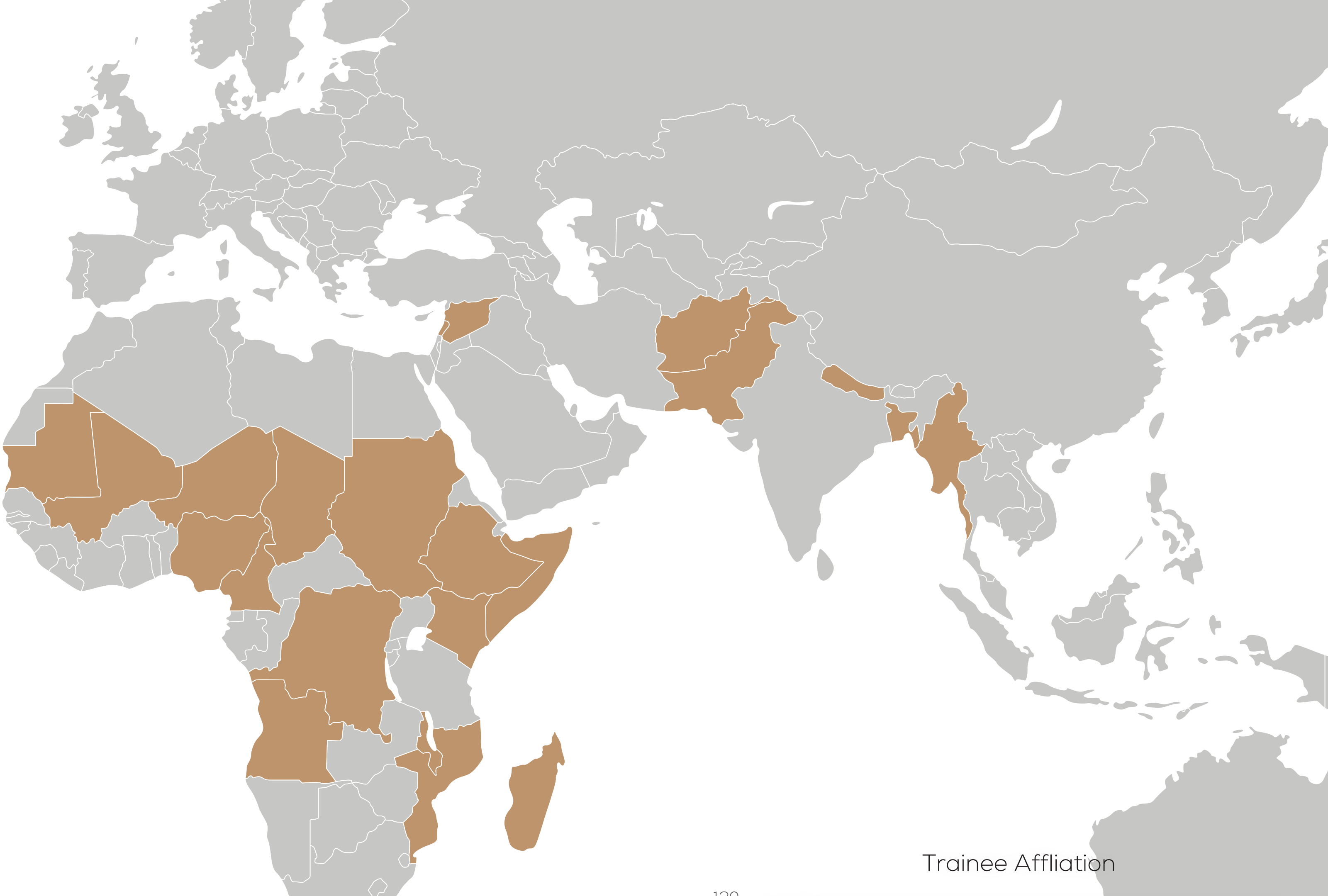
The lack of sufficient information on the nation's nutrition status further impeded an appraisal of the country's nutrition situation. Providing technical support to the Lebanon Nutrition Taskforce, a country-wide survey was launched with two additional surveys encompassing Syrian and Palestinian refugee camps.

These survey results were shared with the Lebanese government and supporting partners and were critical to the development of a response plan to manage the national crisis.



Countries that implemented SMART surveys in 2021

- Afghanistan
- Angola
- Bangladesh
- Cameroon
- Chad
- DRC
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Lebanon
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mozambique
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Syria
- Yemen
- Zambia





VIRTUAL TRAINING

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty and restrictions around the world, including the limitation of in-person capacity building activities. To respond to restrictions of in-person training, the SMART initiative launched **SMART Survey Manager Virtual Training** allowing nutrition and health professionals around the world the opportunity to continue participating in training. Initially piloted in June 2021, the first round of virtual training was conducted in November 2021 with 15 participants. During the 4-week asynchronous training, participants from different countries and backgrounds connected and engaged in online and offline learning activities that included discussions, quizzes, and live sessions. Participants' feedback was positive with many appreciating the mix in content delivery, interactivities' and the e-learning platform, citing that:

"The training went so well, and the facilitators were well knowledgeable and awesome! I loved the mix of live sessions, assignments, reading notes, and videos. I learned a lot and now feel equipped/confident to conduct and analyzed interpret nutrition data."

"Due to my busy schedule, in-person training never seemed doable. The new virtual training finally made it happen as it was easier to coordinate with other responsibilities without the necessity to travel. The current outline provides a nice mix of live sessions, which make it possible to interact with other participants, and self-study via an interactive learning platform".

Multiple virtual pieces of training have been planned for 2022 on the **SMART calendar**.

UPDATED MUAC DATA COLLECTION TOOL

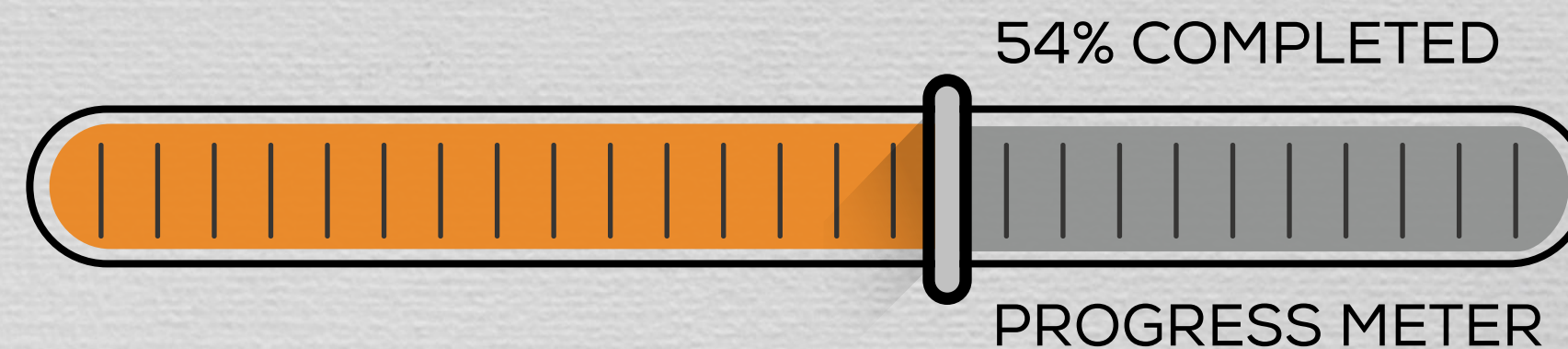
As another response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SMART team introduced an **updated MUAC data collection tool**, available in both English and French, to allow for the collection of data when surveys were not able to be implemented. This tool helps collect MUAC screening information, presenting it in a more meaningful way. The tool is designed to be **used and adapted in any country** improving how screenings for admissions into programs are conducted and gaining better understanding of the nutrition situation in an area.

SMART INNOVATIONS
IN RESPONSE TO
COVID-19

SMART + THE FUTURE OF SMART

The SMART team has been working on designing and developing an innovative, end-to-end digital approach better known as SMART+. SMART+ is an all-in-one digital platform that will provide a real-time global view of malnutrition on the ground. This advancement will allow governments, public health organizations, and NGOs to identify malnutrition hot spots enabling a targeted, timely response.

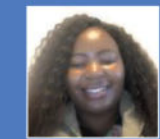
The SMART team has so far completed 54% of the software development for SMART+ minimal viable product (MVP) including the mobile application, platform, aggregator, and dashboard. The SMART+ MVP is planned to launch and be piloted in 2022. To learn more about each of the tools, please visit the [SMART+ web page](#).



PUBLICATIONS

Streamlining SMART survey processes in support of a high quality, nationally owned nutrition information system in Kenya

By Lydia Ndung'u, Lucy Maina-Gathigi, Lucy Kinyua, Hassan Ali Ahmed, Kibet Chirchir and Samuel Mahinda Murage



Lydia Ndung'u is a public health nutritionist, currently working as SMART advisor for East Africa, Southern Africa and Yemen. Lydia has over 10 years of extensive experience in managing, implementing and evaluating programmes in Africa in humanitarian and development contexts for both government and non-governmental organisations.



Lucy Maina-Gathigi is a nutrition officer with UNICEF Kenya, specialising in nutrition information systems. She is the co-chair of the Kenya Nutrition Information Technical Working Group and holds an MSc in Applied Epidemiology and a BSc in Food Nutrition and Dietetics.



Lucy Kinyua is a nutritionist working with the Kenyan Ministry of Health as a monitoring and evaluation manager and is the secretary of the Nutrition Information Technical Working Group. She holds an MSc in Applied Human Nutrition.



Hassan Ali Ahmed is the Associate Director for Nutrition at Action Against Hunger Canada and a lead for the Global SMART Initiative. He has worked with Action Against Hunger since 2014 in emergency contexts before joining the SMART global project in Jordan. Hassan holds an MBA in Strategic Management from the University of Nairobi.



Kibet Chirchir is a public health and monitoring and evaluation practitioner, currently working for the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) as a Nutrition Support Officer, strengthening nutrition information systems at national and sub-national levels in Kenya.



Samuel Mahinda Murage is a Health Records and Information Officer working with the Kenyan Ministry of Health. He has over 20 years of experience working in various levels of the healthcare system from service delivery to the policy level.

The authors recognise the leadership and commitment of the Government of Kenya at national and county levels in improving the quality of the Nutrition Information System. In particular, the authors express sincere thanks to Veronica Kirogo, Head Division of Nutrition and Dietetics, Ministry of Health, for her leadership and guidance as well as to the Nutrition Information Technical Working Group (NITWG) members and their respective agencies, including Action Against Hunger Kenya and World Vision for their tenures as NITWG chair. The authors also recognise UNICEF and other partners for the financial support towards integrated SMART surveys and Action Against Hunger Canada which has acted as the SMART Project Convenor since 2009.

The views of Lucy Maina-Gathigi and Kibet Chirchir incorporated in this article are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF, its executive directors or the countries that they represent and should not be attributed to them.

Field Article

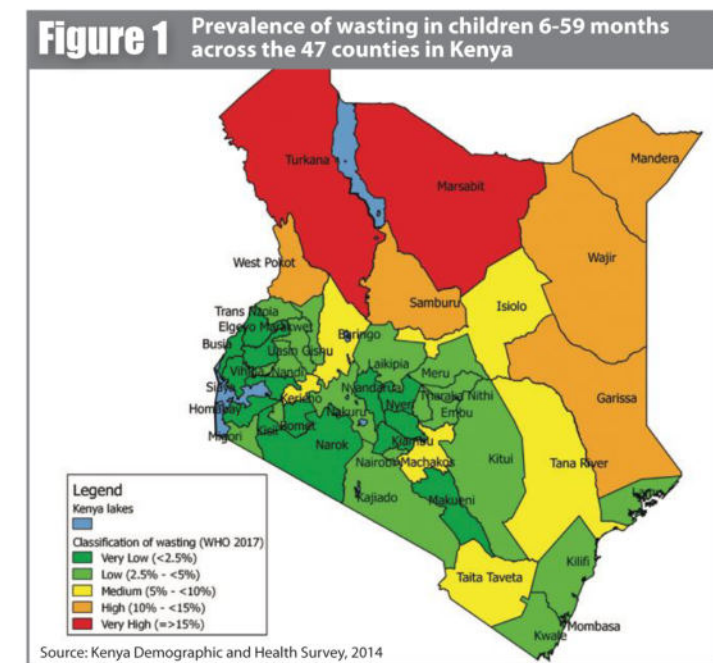
KENYA

What we know: Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) methodology is widely used in Kenya by governments and partners, in both arid and semi-arid areas, in nutrition surveillance and early warning systems.

What this article adds: From 2013 onwards, the processes for conducting SMART surveys in Kenya were streamlined, harmonised and institutionalised under the coordination and leadership of the national Nutrition Information Technical Working Group (NITWG). Key actions to streamline processes included the development of guidelines and standard processes, capacity building, the development of task forces, the setting up of systems to validate all survey methods pre-survey and preliminary results post-survey and the management of a common data repository. The result of these actions has been increased capacity among government staff at both national and county level, improved capacity for the coordination of resource mobilisation and joint planning and survey training. Overall results achieved are the greater national ownership of survey management and results (including greater government funding), government-led survey implementation, data that is comparable over time and between geographic areas and the use of data to inform timely nutrition actions as well as to inform other sectors and the overall situation analysis in the country. Key drivers of this success include the commitment to capacitate national staff at all levels, succession planning, consistent stakeholder communication and the availability of complementary data for situations (such as in COVID-19) when SMART surveys could not be undertaken.

Background

Kenya has set out a vision to transform into a globally competitive and prosperous nation with a high quality of life by 2030. Poor health and nutrition status are major setbacks towards realising this vision, with huge disparities in the distribution of malnutrition observed across the country (Figure 1). The nutrition situation quickly deteriorates during drought periods in many parts of Kenya with critical and extremely critical levels of undernutrition regularly recorded in arid counties (Turkana, Mandera, Wajir and parts of Marsabit counties). A national Nutrition Information System (NIS) is critical to providing up to date nutrition surveillance and monitoring information to inform a timely, high quality nutrition response.



New Publications produced from our SMART surveys include:

Streamlining SMART survey processes in support of high quality, nationally owned nutrition information system in Kenya

Adaptations to SMART surveys in the context of COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

COVID19

Adaptations to SMART surveys in the context of COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

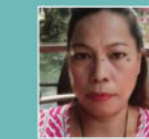
By Md. Lalan Miah, Bijoy Sarker, Jogie Abujejo Agbogon, Brigitte Tonon, Mary Chelang'at Koeh and Md. Shahin Emtazur Rahman



Md. Lalan Miah is the Nutrition Surveillance Manager for Action Against Hunger Bangladesh. He has seven years' experience leading the nutrition surveillance project in both host communities and refugee camps and leads the Nutrition Sector Assessment and Information Technical Working Group (AIM-TWG).



Bijoy Sarker is a Public Health Nutritionist currently working as SMART Regional Advisor for Asia with Action Against Hunger Canada. He has nearly a decade of emergency nutrition and surveillance experience from Bangladesh, South Sudan and Sierra Leone and as a roving health and nutrition expert for the South Asia region.



Jogie Abujejo Agbogon is the current Nutrition and Health Head of Department for ACF Bangladesh. She has over 12 years' experience working in nutrition and health in Myanmar, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Bangladesh for ACF and previous experience with other humanitarian agencies in sub-Saharan Africa.



Brigitte Tonon is the ACF France Regional Health and Nutrition Technical Advisor for Asia. She has many years of experience working across multiple countries and HQs for ACF, Première Urgence Internationale and Médecins du Monde in health and nutrition.



Mary Chelang'at Koeh is a nutrition and food security officer for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Cox's Bazar sub-office supporting the nutrition and food security programmes. She has worked in nutrition for 12 years across Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.



Md. Shahin Emtazur Rahman is a Public Health Nutritionist and Senior Nutrition and Food Security Associate for UNHCR. He has nine years' experience working in nutrition, particularly in refugee camp contexts.

The authors acknowledge the following for their technical and operational support and collaboration: National Nutrition Services (NNS), the Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Nutrition Sector Assessment and Information Management Technical Working Group and implementing partners. The authors also thank Md. Saiful Islam Talukder and G.M. Mosharaf Hossain and the survey team, the Action Against Hunger Bangladesh Mission, Jana Daher, the Global SMART Initiative and Action Against Hunger Canada.

Funding support was provided by UNHCR, the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Field Article



BANGLADESH

What we know: Nutrition programming, including nutrition surveys, has faced significant disruption as a result of the restrictions in movement arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

What this article adds: Adaptations to the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) survey methodology and operations were made in the context of Cox's Bazar refugee camps in Bangladesh during 2020 to enable data collection to continue in the COVID-19 context. Adaptations included reducing the number of indicators, reducing sample size, addressing myths and fears around COVID-19 through pre-survey community sensitisation; using experienced enumerators to shorten pre-survey training; and use of infection prevention control (IPC) measures by the survey team during the survey. Team members and household members were screened for COVID-19 symptoms regularly and excluded if symptoms were declared. The overall non-respondent rate was very low (5.4%-8.3%) and exclusions due to COVID-19 were low at 1.5%. Adaptations worked to allow the collection of high-quality data. An additional 3 to 5 minutes were required per household to allow for implementation of IPC measures. The experience shows that context-specific adaptations and community sensitisation and mobilisation can enable safe, quality data collection in the COVID-19 context.

Background

Cox's Bazar nutrition context

Cox's Bazar (CXB) is a highly disaster-prone coastal district in Bangladesh and one of 20 of Bangladesh's 64 districts identified as vulnerable with an estimated poverty prevalence rate of 16.6% (Government of Bangladesh, 2017). The CXB district has a host population of 2,290,000 and an additional estimated population of 871,924 refugees residing in 32 makeshift and two registered refugee camps across Ukchia and Teknaf (sub-districts) (Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR, 2021). Since the influx of refugees in 2017, the Nutrition Sector in CXB has been providing comprehensive nutrition services to address the underlying causes of malnutrition across all camps targeting children under five years of age, children over five years of age, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women. Although the protracted crisis in CXB has stabilised to some extent, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact, limiting access to services, which has necessitated adaptations to nutrition programmes. Adaptations to community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) programmes in CXB have been outlined in recent *Field Exchange* articles.¹

¹ <https://www.enonline.net/fex/63/cmamcovid19adaptations>
<https://www.enonline.net/fex/63/cxbvitaminasupplementation>



FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE SMART METHODOLOGY, PLEASE VISIT THE RESOURCES PAGE OR THE SMART FORUM ON OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT THE SMART TEAM AT ACTION AGAINST HUNGER CANADA:

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