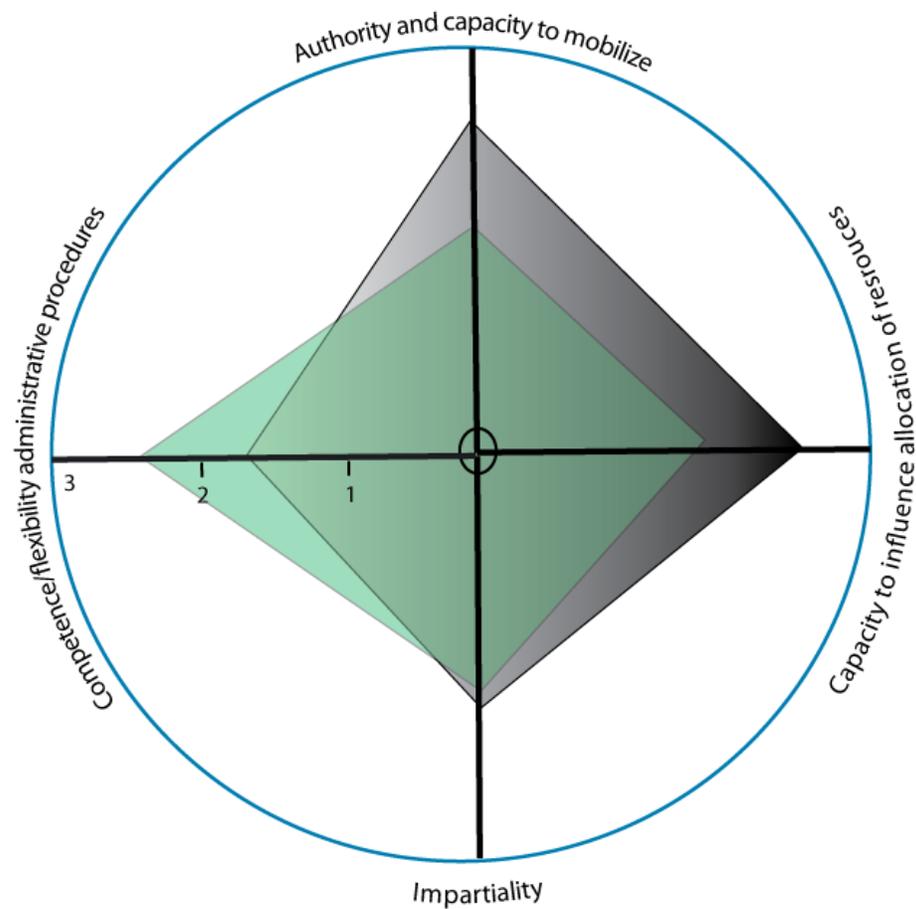# Multi-sectorial Approaches to Nutrition: Workshop Design Guidelines

**Daniel Buckles, SAS[2] Dialogue**

**www.sas2.net**



**February, 2016**

# Multi-sectorial Approaches to Nutrition: Workshop Design Guidelines

## INTRODUCTION

After many decades of relative neglect, chronic malnutrition as reflected in stunting is now receiving strong policy attention at the global level and in many African countries, with a particular interest in the design and implementation of multi-sectorial programmes in nutrition. While it is widely understood that many sectors influence nutrition outcomes (health, agriculture, water and sanitation, social protection, education, etc.) achieving synergy of action is difficult due the multi-faceted nature of malnutrition and a range of barriers to collaboration both within and across sectors. Complexity in multi-sectorial programming arise mainly from the need for dynamic, adaptive and integrated interventions at many levels. Barriers to collaboration by stakeholders are rooted in the different interests and mandates of the stakeholders involved and other gaps or conflicts both within and across sectors. These two features of multi-sectorial nutrition and related policies and programs – complexity and barriers to collaboration – present significant challenges for country efforts to improve nutrition.

Many countries in Africa are at an early stage in the development of a multisectorial approach to nutrition (MSN) and are charting their own course to learning, policy development and implementation. In this context, national and regional stakeholders in Mali and Burkina Faso responsible for fighting malnutrition met in a series of workshops in 2015 designed to support dialogue and plan means to overcome barriers to multisectorial planning and implementation. National workshops in Ségou (Mali) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) brought together a range of stakeholders from mid to senior levels in government and among development partners (UN agencies, bilateral organizations, International and national Non-Governmental Organizations), private sector, academia and civil society organizations for discussions about multi-sectorial approaches to nutrition. In Mali the lead institution was the Ministère de la Santé et de l'Hygiène Publique while in Burkina Faso this lead role was played by the Nutrition Directorate of the Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF in both countries. Four sub-national workshops on the same topic were held in selected districts in Mali (Bankass and Yorosso), with local authorities and regional representatives of national agencies and NGOs. The regional workshops were organized by the Malian non-governmental organization Association pour Soutien du Développement des Activités de Population (ASDAP). Cornell University provided technical and financial support and played a coordinating role for all of the workshops, with workshop design,

training and facilitation support provided by Daniel Buckles on behalf of the Canadian consulting firm SAS2 Dialogue.[1]

Broadly, each workshop was intended to support planning across boundaries, mobilize people and knowledge from different perspectives, and co-create understanding of nutrition issues that could inspire and persuade people and institutions. The workshops built on earlier attempts by Cornell University to sensitize actors, departments and agencies regarding their potential contributions to fighting malnutrition, and were grounded in the specific circumstances and needs of the convening organizations. Each workshop had a unique focus and design reflecting its purpose and participants. The national workshop in Mali sought to address specific barriers to implementation of the recently adopted national policy on nutrition (PNN) and the Multi-sectorial Nutrition Action Plan (PAMN). The design therefore focused on the sequence of events leading to adoption of the policy and plan, the nature of the challenges faced when trying to implement the plan and actions to address these core challenges. It also examined the role and next steps of the coordinating body established by the PAMN and criteria and indicators for assessing progress on the PAMN (see cover graphic, which compares two potential coordinating bodies on four criteria).

The national workshop in Burkina Faso required a broader perspective on the issues of multi-sectorial nutrition because no multi-sectorial policy or plan of action had yet been adopted. Furthermore, many of the stakeholders were not yet fully aware of the reasons for and potential benefits of a multi-sectorial approach. Consequently, the design started with an assessment of the stakeholders affected by or with influence over nutrition outcomes in Burkina Faso and provided concrete examples of what higher levels of coordination or interaction between stakeholders might look like in real life. This was intended to create the conditions for discussion of challenges faced when working in a multi-sectorial mode, and launched a first round of planning around the creation of a coordinating body that could be created at a later date through a national policy.

The sub-national workshops in Mali (Bankass and Yorosso) took two different forms. For one set of regional stakeholders (local authorities) the workshop revolved around existing local development plans and the identification of planned and budgeted activities with the potential to contribute to positive nutrition outcomes. They then made decisions about how to implement these planned activities in nutrition-friendly ways (for example, by distributing nutrient-rich red sorghum varieties instead of the white sorghum varieties they had planned to distribute). For a different set of regional stakeholders (representatives of national agencies and non-governmental organizations) the workshop sought to build their capacity to convene and facilitate regional planning processes around the theme of nutrition. The workshop design drew on elements from both national workshops (Mali and Burkina Faso) with a view to modelling discussions the participants could facilitate themselves with stakeholders

---

[1] The author wishes to acknowledge the design and facilitation support of Amadou Traore, Dia Sanou and Suzanne Gervais of Cornell University. Raoul Cyr and Saloum Mamari Bocana of ASDAP played key roles (with Amadou Traore) in the facilitation of the four regional workshops in Mali, with assistance from Bienfait Eca M'Mbakwa.

new to the topic and uncertain about how it might relate to the work they were already mandated to do.

This document shares the four workshop designs implemented in Mali and Burkina Faso. Training for the facilitators of these workshops was part of the approach by Cornell University and SAS2 Dialogue at the sub-national level, with a view to eventually creating a training-of-trainers process to sustain the capacities created. This document also shares guidelines for workshop design, focusing on the selection and sequencing of tools to answer specific questions grounded in the circumstances and needs of those involved.

The guidelines and workshop designs reflect a key principle of the SAS2 Dialogue approach, which is to avoid packaged methodologies in favour of process design grounded in discussions of who and what the workshops are for (purpose, and from whose point of view). The designs include reference to the tools selected for the workshops from a much larger collection of potential tools that make up the SAS2 Dialogue toolbox. The full collection is available at www.sas2.net. Finer adaptations of each tool and facilitation details such as group formation are not included here as these are too specific to be of use to a general reader. Our hope is that the workshop designs and design guidelines will prove useful to organizers and facilitators seeking to address malnutrition and the challenge of coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders.

Focus: Barriers to implementation of the
multi-sectorial nutrition action plan (Mali)

Timeframe: 2 days

**SESSION 1**
**Recent history**
*(Timeline)*

*What are the significant events leading to this moment in the development of a national multisectorial nutrition action plan?*

**SESSION 2**
**Current barriers**
*(Gaps & conflicts)*

*What are the barriers we face when trying to implement the multi-sectorial nutrition action plan? Are they conflicts over power, competing interests, moral values, or information and communication? Or are the barriers due to gaps affecting implementation?*

**SESSION 3**
**Resolving the main barriers**
*(Carrousel + Contribution & Feasibility)*

*How can the main barriers to implementation be resolved in ways that are feasible and contribute to better implementation? What and when are the next steps to be taken and by whom?*

**Opening**

*Day one*

*Welcome & introductions*

**Background on the national policy and the rationale for a multisectoral approach to nutrition**

**SESSION 4**
**Criteria and indicators of progress**
*(Socratic wheel)*

*How would we know we are making progress with plans to improve implementation? What should we monitor?*

**Closure**

*End of workshop*
*Day two*

**SESSION 5**
**Next steps for coordinating bodies**
*(Timeline + Levels of support)*

*Where do planned next steps fit into the timeline of significant events? What is the level of support for the overall plan?*

Focus: Inter-sector Dialogue on Mult-sectorial Nutrition (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)

Timeframe: 3 days

**SESSION 1**
**Stakeholder Roles**
*(Stakeholder Rainbow)*

*Who are the stakeholders that should be involved, and in what capacity?*

*What do stakeholders expect of each other, and what would greater synergy among stakeholders look like?*

**SESSION 2**
**Stakeholder Interactions**
*(Negotiation Fair)*

**SESSION 3**
**Barriers to multi-sectorial collaboration**
*(Gaps and Conflicts)*

*What are the barriers to multisectorial collaboration? Are they conflicts or gaps in power, competing interests, moral values, or information and communication?*

**Opening**

*Day one*

*Welcome & introductions*

**Background and rationale for a multisectoral approach to nutrition**

**SESSION 4**
**Selecting a coordinating body**
*(Decision Matrix + Socratic Wheel)*

*What conditions need to be in place for an effective multisectoral nutrition system? What qualities are needed in an effective coordinating body?*

**Closure**
*Workshop recommendations*
*Day three*

**SESSION 5**
**Collaborative leadership competencies**
*(Socratic Wheel)*

*What individual competencies are needed to show collaborative leadership in the nutrition context, and how can these be developed?*

Focus: Sub-national workshop (Bankass and Yorosso) on integrating nutrition actions and outcomes into local development plans
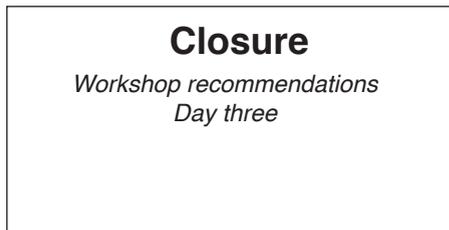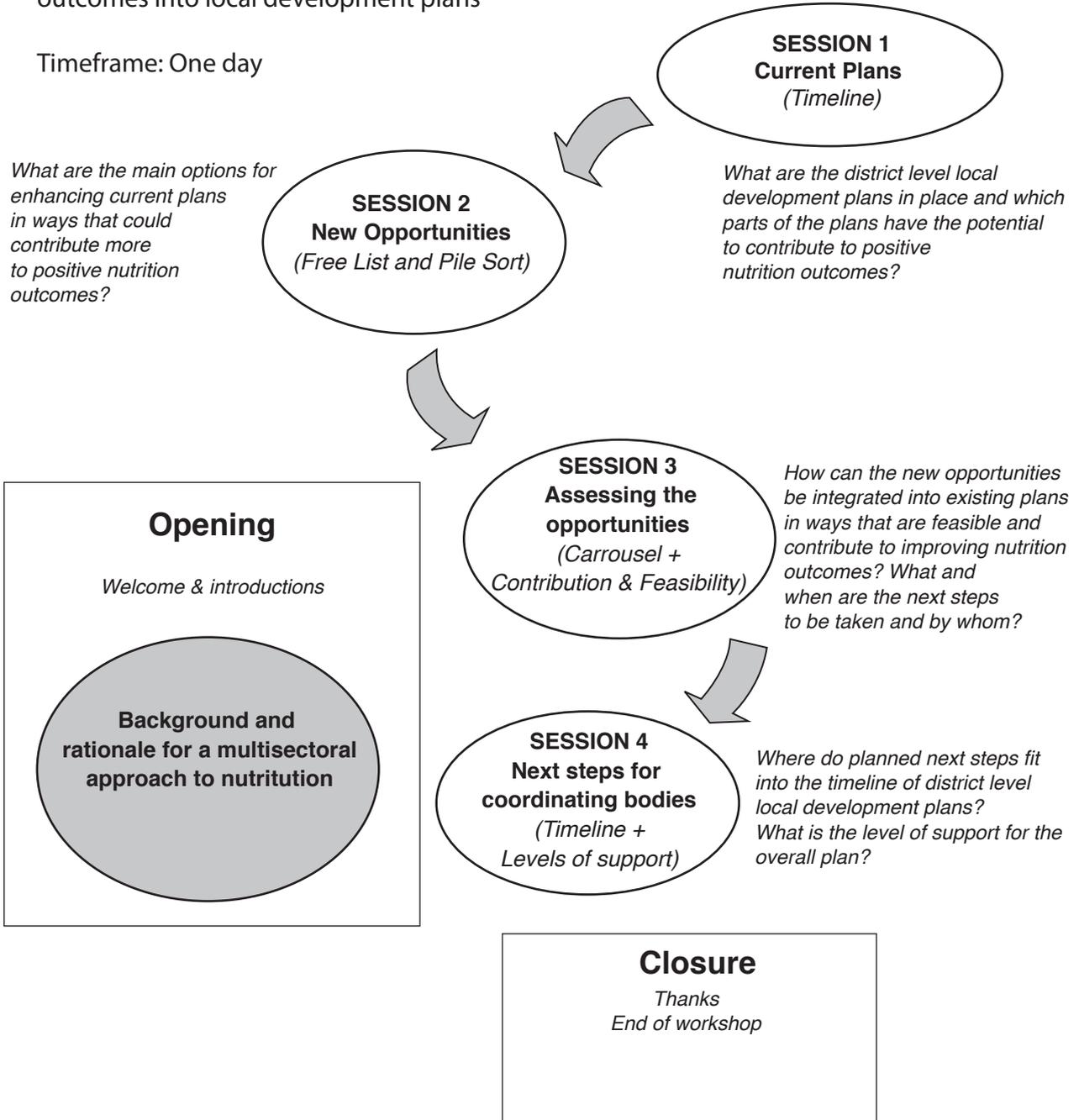
Timeframe: One day

**SESSION 1**
**Current Plans**
*(Timeline)*

*What are the district level local development plans in place and which parts of the plans have the potential to contribute to positive nutrition outcomes?*

*What are the main options for enhancing current plans in ways that could contribute more to positive nutrition outcomes?*

**SESSION 2**
**New Opportunities**
*(Free List and Pile Sort)*

**SESSION 3**
**Assessing the opportunities**
*(Carrousel + Contribution & Feasibility)*

*How can the new opportunities be integrated into existing plans in ways that are feasible and contribute to improving nutrition outcomes? What and when are the next steps to be taken and by whom?*

**Opening**

*Welcome & introductions*

**Background and rationale for a multisectoral approach to nutrition**

**SESSION 4**
**Next steps for coordinating bodies**
*(Timeline + Levels of support)*

*Where do planned next steps fit into the timeline of district level local development plans? What is the level of support for the overall plan?*

**Closure**
*Thanks*
*End of workshop*

Focus: Building capacity to convene and facilitate regional planning processes around the theme of nutrition (Bankass and Yorosso, Mali)

Timeframe: 3 days

**SESSION 1**
**Recent history**
*(Timeline)*

*What are the significant events leading to this moment in the development of a national multisectoral action plan for nutrition?*

**SESSION 2**
**Stakeholder Roles**
*(Stakeholder Rainbow + Table)*

*Who are the stakeholders that should be involved, and in what capacity?*

**SESSION 3**
**Stakeholder Interactions**
*(Negotiation Fair)*

*What do stakeholders expect of each other, and what would greater synergy among stakeholders look like?*

**Opening**

*Day one*

*Welcome & introductions*

**Background and rationale for a multisectoral approach to nutrition**

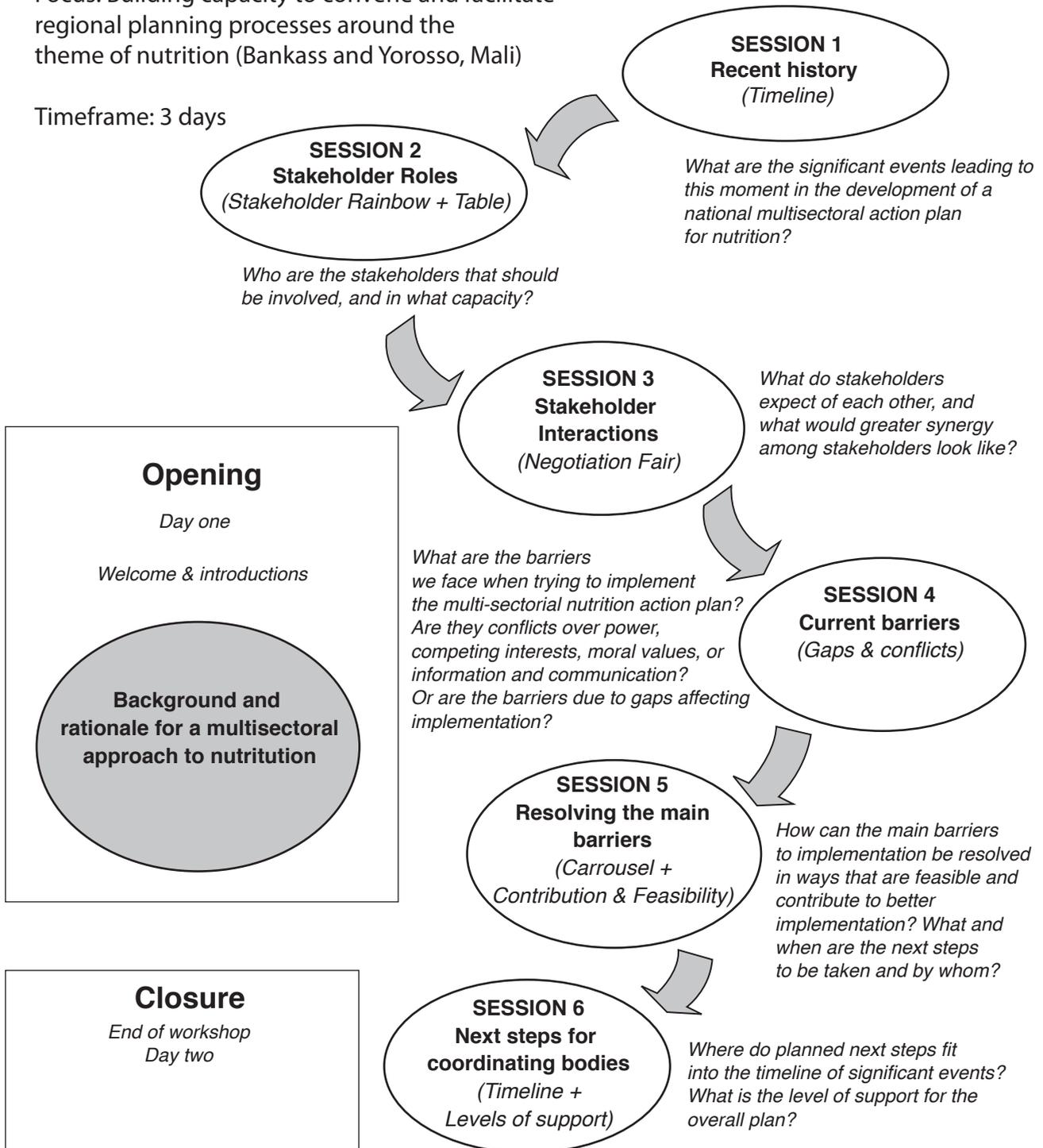*What are the barriers we face when trying to implement the multi-sectorial nutrition action plan? Are they conflicts over power, competing interests, moral values, or information and communication? Or are the barriers due to gaps affecting implementation?*

**SESSION 4**
**Current barriers**
*(Gaps & conflicts)*

**SESSION 5**
**Resolving the main barriers**
*(Carrousel + Contribution & Feasibility)*

*How can the main barriers to implementation be resolved in ways that are feasible and contribute to better implementation? What and when are the next steps to be taken and by whom?*

**Closure**
*End of workshop*
*Day two*

**SESSION 6**
**Next steps for coordinating bodies**
*(Timeline + Levels of support)*

*Where do planned next steps fit into the timeline of significant events? What is the level of support for the overall plan?*

# Guidelines for Workshop Design[1]
## Daniel Buckles, SAS[2] Dialogue
## www.sas2.net

How you choose facilitation and analytical techniques and adjust them to a workshop setting is not a science involving strict rules. Rather, it is an art that requires the exercise of judgment, creativity, and a lot of practice. To make full use of the SAS[2] Dialogue approach to process design in the context of multisectoral approaches to nutrition (MSN) practitioners must have a clear idea of the context that prompts demand for collaboration, the workshop purpose, and who needs to be involved. Then you can identify the main questions to be asked, the prior knowledge and decisions that can help answer these questions, and the amount of time and the resources that are available or needed to get the work done. Practitioners can then decide what participatory tools will answer the questions, what other methods they should use and how to organize the tools and steps in sequence. They also need to decide what supporting technology is needed, how to combine story telling with tables and diagrams, and whether the technique(s) used should be made explicit or not. Finally, practitioners must decide when to divide participants into subgroups, what role(s) should the facilitator(s) play, and how to document the inquiry process and its results.

The following organizes these decisions into steps to follow when designing a workshop within a broader process, and choices to make when selecting the tools. Keep in mind that the steps outlined below are not always linear and may require **going back and forth** (between defining the context and the purpose of the inquiry, clarifying the main questions, and then selecting the tools, for instance).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Consider the setting** | **1** | To design a workshop, you should first explore the general **context** and the immediate **situation** that needs attention. Talk to the key people and read the relevant documents to validate your understanding of this situation, its context and the broader concerns that prompted the need for collaboration in the first place. |
| **Identify predefined modalities** | **2** | Some key modalities of your workshop may already be decided and may influence the way you design the process (for instance, how much time you have). Identify these predefined modalities, including:<br><br>(a) **Who** will be involved in the workshop; |

---

[1] This section is an adaptation of a set of guidelines published in "A Guide to Collaborative Inquiry and Social Engagement" (Copyright 2008 by Jacques Chevalier and Daniel Buckles and available online in English, French and Spanish at www.idrc.ca and www.sas2.net).

(b) The participants' **profiles** and **roles**;

(c) How much **time** will be dedicated to the workshop;

(d) The available **inputs** (knowledge, decisions) from previous events;

(e) The role(s) that the **facilitator**(s) should play.

When defining roles, decide whether or not the facilitator or facilitating team is expected to combine various roles, such as instructor, expert-consultant, researcher, note-taker, or actor. Teamwork and a clear division of labor may be necessary when the facilitator(s) must combine several roles.

If you need SAS$^2$ techniques to answer these questions, go to Step 3 and start your inquiry with the assessment of key modalities.

## Define the purpose

**3** Define the type of workshop you wish to undertake, its goal, its scope, and the expected results.

(a) **Type**: does the workshop stand alone (for example, to help mitigate nutrition problems in one district) or form part of a broader inquiry process such as scaling up MSN to the whole country? Is it an upstream assessment of an existing situation for planning purposes (inquiring into the current assets and barriers to MSN collaboration in a set of districts, for instance), a midstream monitoring exercise to take stock of progress towards results (against criteria and indicators), or a downstream evaluation of the outcome of your actions against your objectives or against your observations on the situation prior to your intervention (for instance, a comparison of the current situation with that before any MSN implementation)?

(b) **Goal**: is the workshop for planning, decision making, information sharing or for several purposes? Be careful not to combine too many purposes in the same event as you may lose focus and not achieve a primary goal.

(c) **Scope**: what is the amount of information, analysis and participation that are needed to achieve the goal?

(d) **Results**: what are the expected or desired results (outputs, outcomes) of your workshop?

Make sure that the type of assessment you wish to perform, its goal, its scope, and the expected results are compatible with the predefined modalities identified in Step 2.

## Design the inquiry

**4** You're now in a position to design your workshop in some detail. There are several steps to this process.

## Identify and clarify your main question(s)...

**i** The first step consists in identifying the **main questions** that your workshop is expected to answer. To do this, explore and unpack the different questions that may seem relevant, and clarify each of them. Then identify the question(s) that are the most important and that reflect the purpose and the key modalities of your

workshop, as defined in Step 1 and Step 2. Make sure to clarify each question and the main ideas to be used in your workshop, using terms that are meaningful to the participants.

For tips on how to clarify the main question(s), see *Active Listening* in the SAS2 Dialogue handbook. If the questions are too general, use the **Laddering Down** technique to make them more concrete. Ask 'What do you mean by this?' or 'Can you think of a situation where these questions must be answered?' If the questions are too concrete, use the **Laddering Up** technique to make them more general. Ask 'Why are these questions so important?', 'What do they have in common?', or 'Is there something we should know to help us answer these questions?'

**… and organize them in sequence**

As you're clarifying the main questions to be explored, try to put the questions in the right **sequential order** using output-input reasoning (where the answer to one question serves as the input to the question that follows). For instance, the question you may ask about what your options are should be answered first before you can raise the next question — what are your preferred options?

---

**Select SAS$^2$ techniques…**

**ii** You've now reached an important step in the design process, which consists in selecting and sequencing the SAS$^2$ Dialogue techniques and other methods that you need for your workshop. To help you choose the right SAS$^2$ techniques, see below and the full collection of tools at www.sas2.net.

**… and other methods**

To be fully effective, SAS$^2$ techniques must be combined with the learning systems and the facilitation procedures that are appropriate to the situation. There is no SAS$^2$ technique to do Vitamin A deficiency analysis or to provide legal advice on food rights, for instance. These topics require particular forms of knowledge and inquiry that must be combined with SAS$^2$ tools if a workshop is to achieve the expected results. Choose the **combination of methods** that suits your needs, including the existing day-to-day rules and procedures to present information, create priorities, make plans, resolve problems, take action, and interact with others in the process. As a general rule, avoid power point presentations whenever possible and keep all formal presentations to under 20 minutes at a time. If several presentations are needed, break them up into short segments that set up or launch group work.

**Vary and order the techniques**

When using several techniques involving tables or diagrams, **vary the techniques** and the kinds of tables or diagrams you will be using so as to avoid fatigue.

You should also **identify the order** in which you plan to apply each technique. The way you organize the techniques in sequence should match the way you ordered the questions in Step 4.1 using output-input reasoning.

When sequencing the techniques, you may plan to pre-test the technique with key parties involved in the process, if needed. Also, if you plan to use SAS$^2$ techniques to evaluate a project when completed, you may choose to do some **pre-post**

**testing** by applying the same assessment technique twice: at the beginning of the process, before the activities are started, and then at the end to see if things have changed as planned.

---

**Selection tips**

*Point of entry and iteration*

To select the right module and techniques, a good question to ask is whether you should focus on assessing the *Problems*, profiling the *Actors*, or exploring the *Options* for action? Decide this in light of the main question(s) you're asking as well as the setting, the purpose and the predefined modalities of your inquiry. Focus on what is *more pressing* and leave the other issues (and modules) in the background until you're ready to explore them in detail. **Going back and forth** between *Problems*, *Actors*, and *Options* for action when managing a complex and dynamic situation may be important. Be aware that the workshop you do may have to be revisited again later in light of changing circumstances or new information from other assessments.

---

*Use predefined or elicited concepts?*

Some SAS$^2$ techniques such as *Gaps and Conflicts*, *Social Analysis CLIP* or *Legitimacy* can help you explore problems, actions, and relations by using predefined concepts adapted from the social sciences (power, legitimacy, gaps in values or information, for instance). Other techniques, including those entitled 'Domain' or 'Dynamics', involve elements, characteristics, and relations that are fully elicited by the participants. When looking for the right technique to apply in a particular situation, decide whether you should start with and validate predefined concepts or generate relevant concepts with the participants themselves.

---

**Design all steps**   **iii**

Define all the **steps** and the **procedures** used in each technique. Adjust each technique by choosing the right level of application and technology and adjusting the relative weight of formal analysis and description, narration or story telling. Decide how explicit the instructions should be and how participants should interact and contribute. The following guidelines can help you make these decisions.

---

**Define the level of application**

Use the instructions provided in each SAS$^2$ technique and your assessment of the following factors to decide how simple or advanced each application of a SAS$^2$ technique needs to be:

- How much **time** and **resources** do you have to apply the technique?

- How **familiar** are you with the technique?

  It is usually safer to start with simpler applications of the technique you select and become familiar with it before you make full use of it.

- How **complex** are the issues? Can you address the issues using simple indicators of key factors, or do you need to divide these factors into their component parts (for instance, power can be divided into control over wealth, political authority, the use of force, and access to information and communication)?

One way to apply a technique at an advanced level consists in dividing a key variable into its component parts — looking at the various expressions of the *power* variable in *Social Analysis Clip*, for instance. By contrast, you can reduce the level of application of a technique by focusing on some key indicators that summarize what the assessment is about. These indicators should be SMART — specific, measurable, applicable, realistic, and timely.

- How **reliable** do you want the results to be? Do you need to ensure that the analysis is valid by providing sound and detailed information and by making sure stakeholders agree with the findings?

- How much **dialogue** do you want there to be between knowledge systems (such as local knowledge and the natural sciences)?

- What are the **expected results** and how important are the decisions that will follow from the exercise? Are the **decisions reversible** if they prove to be wrong?

The level at which you apply a technique should be based on your answers to these questions. It is a good idea to avoid extremes: one where you apply $SAS^2$ techniques at such advanced levels that real stakeholder participation becomes difficult and action is always pushed back into the distant future, once all factors are fully analyzed; and the other extreme where you use the techniques in a mechanical and superficial way, without providing the details, nuances and analyses that you need to make the inquiry meaningful and reliable.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Choose the right technology** | For each $SAS^2$ technique you use, you must decide what kind of facilitation equipment you will need, such as cards, flipcharts, drawing material, a projector, and so on. |
| **Combine formal analysis and narration** | Think of the best way to combine and move between narration (describing events, telling stories) and formal analysis supported by diagrams and tables.<br><br>The role of formal analysis is to organize your information and findings in ways that are clear, logical, and succinct. Narration (whether oral or written) gives you the context, the sequence of events, *a sense of purpose*, and some details that add richness and texture to your understanding of the situation. When using $SAS^2$ techniques you can start with narratives and then convert the findings into formal analyses, or vice-versa. The important point to remember is to combine the two modes of understanding and communication and adjust the relative weight of each mode to suit your needs. You should also carefully read the instructions provided in each technique on how to integrate the collection of quantitative data (ratings for instance) with the analysis and the interpretation of your findings in light of group comments and discussions. |
| **Form and move between groups?** | Decide whether you will divide all participants into subgroups and how each subgroup will contribute to the exercise (for example, by getting groups to complete the ratings for different rows in a table). Decide whether each subgroup |

should be homogeneous (using the specialized knowledge they have on the subject, for instance) or heterogeneous (to make sure the exercise expresses views that are representative of the entire group). Use the option of subgroups only if all participants don't need to be involved in all parts of the assessment.

Pay special attention to differences that may affect how people assess the same issues. You may create subgroups based on age, gender, marital status, ethnic origin, religion, education, the amount of time they have lived in a certain place, their place of residence (such as rural and urban, old and new immigrants), their occupation (such as non-agricultural workers in a farming area), or their role in an organization or project.

Plan realistic ways to help people participate in a workshop process. This includes deciding whether all the key actors should be present or not. In some cases you may prefer to work only with actors that are keen to cooperate. You can then help them analyze the relevant issues and develop plans suited to their needs. In other cases you may prefer to ask a third party to facilitate the exercise by interviewing individuals or small groups separately, and then presenting the results at a general meeting where all the parties are together (with their prior consent).

## Explain the technique?

Decide when to share the step-by-step instructions of a technique, and when to avoid explaining these instructions to the participants so as not to detract their attention from the exercise and the substance of the discussion. In the latter case, the technique should be used discreetly to guide a group facilitation process, and to organize the findings in the facilitator's mind or notebook (during or after the event). If you're using a technique that requires participants to complete a table, you can ask participants to compare and score cards that represent different elements (such as problems, activities, options or actors), and later enter the scores in the table.

## Identify remaining modalities

**iv** Identify the remaining modalities of your inquiry process, those that were not predefined and identified in Step 2, including:

(a) **Who** will be involved in the assessment;

(b) The participants' **profiles** and **roles**;

(c) How much **time** will be dedicated to the assessment;

(d) The available **inputs** (knowledge, decisions) from previous events;

(e) The role(s) that the **facilitator**(s) should play.

Make sure that the decisions you take in regards to these modalities are compatible with the purpose of the assessment and all other decisions you have taken when designing the activity.

## Plan the documentation

**5** Define the steps you will take to document the results of your SAS$^2$ assessment during and after the exercise (for example, by taking notes, voice recording,

videography) and assign the related responsibilities (note taking, report writing, etc). Decide how extensively you will report on the group discussions, and determine the exact purpose or use you will make of the documentation after the exercise (towards a formal report or an online publication, for example).

Documentation of the exercise should at least include the following elements:

- The purpose of the assessment;

- The context requiring the assessment;

- Process specifications;

- A descriptive analysis of the results;

- An interpretation of the findings;

- Follow-up actions identified by the participants;

- Observations regarding what went well or difficulties encountered during the process.

See *Writing Guidelines* in "A Guide to Collaborative Inquiry and Social Engagement" (www.sas2.net) for suggestions on what can be covered under each element.