



Global Nutrition Report Mid-Term Review

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Answering
tomorrow's
challenges
today

Contributors

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Executive Summary

Background: This report presents the findings of an independent mid-term review of the performance (relevance, coherence, and effectiveness) of the Global Nutrition Report (GNR) between 2018-2021 in relation to its strategic vision. It includes an analysis of key external and internal factors that have influenced the GNR's performance. Options for building on enabling factors and addressing challenges are considered.

Successes: The review concludes that the GNR is widely regarded as an essential source of independent, high-quality evidence relevant for informing policies, investments, and action on nutrition. GNR products are found to be particularly useful for nutrition advocacy stakeholders to help make the case for investing in nutrition. The independence and the scientific rigour of its analysis are considered to be of enormous added value to global efforts to end malnutrition in all its forms¹. Both characteristics are seen to be critical and need to be protected and sustained. During 2021, the GNR has been successful in enhancing its position as a key accountability mechanism through the establishment of the Nutrition Accountability Framework (NAF). The GNR's work ahead of and during the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in December 2021 was consistently praised.

Areas for improvement: There are strong concerns that the influence of the GNR is declining, and its full potential is not being met. Nutrition is increasingly understood by policy makers to be integral to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals and addressing challenges including climate change, food systems and COVID-19. The GNR has made important contributions to this shift in understanding but could increase its ability to provide data and evidence which promotes nutrition as a priority across development policies and actions. The GNR needs to enhance its policy responsiveness, relevance and influence whilst avoiding becoming policy prescriptive. In addition to tracking progress against nutrition targets and delivery on commitments, there are strong calls for the GNR to focus more on what types of policies and actions have been shown to work in different contexts, as well as factors that enable and hinder progress in reducing malnutrition in all its forms. This would increase the GNR's relevance for country level decision makers and implementers, as well as help inform external financial and technical assistance. Enhanced country nutrition profiles could provide stronger building blocks for the GNR's regional and global analyses. However, an increased country focus will require prioritisation given available resources.

Target audiences: The GNR needs to clarify its primary audiences and improve the policy relevance of its messaging and engagement with key political processes beyond nutrition in order to increase its effectiveness. Policy makers and advocates, particularly from low-income countries, working on wider policy issues should be considered as primary audiences rather than secondary, as defined in the current GNR Strategic Vision.

Roles and definitions of success: The GNR needs to clearly define its role within the wider nutrition ecosystem and the limits to its role in relation to both policy influencing and accountability. The GNR needs to increase its policy relevance and influence whilst avoiding engaging in advocacy activities that could compromise its independence and credibility. There is a risk that expectations have been created that cannot be met, particularly in relation to the NAF. The GNR should more clearly define what it can realistically achieve and refine definitions of success.

¹ When the term malnutrition is used in this report it refers to all forms of malnutrition and recognises the need to address underlying determinants, including poor diets, poverty, inadequate access to water, sanitation and health care.

Strategic partnerships: Whilst clarifying its own role, the GNR needs to strengthen its strategic partnerships with key actors in relation to both evidence generators and users, particularly at country-level. The GNR's relationship with the SUN Movement, the UN Committee on World Food Security and other inter-governmental bodies, including regional entities, require particular consideration. There is a need to develop the GNR's global network of experts and promote wider scientific consensus, especially in relation to contentious policy issues, ensuring transparent, collaborative processes for achieving this.

Governance: Reaching greater agreement on key strategic issues will help strengthen internal collaboration, trust, and governance. However, there is also an urgent need to clarify divisions of responsibility, lines of accountability, ways of working and improve communication between GNR entities, i.e. Stakeholder Group, Independent Expert Group and Host Organisation. Conflict of interest measures should be strengthened to ensure GNR strategy, products and services are as independent as possible from the influence of stakeholders that are the subject of GNR's analysis. Decision-making processes need to be inclusive and transparent with decisions well documented and made accessible internally and externally. There is a need to better ensure that voices from beyond the nutrition community, particularly from low-income countries, help guide the GNR's strategic priorities and approach.

Expectations and capacities to deliver: It is remarkable how much the GNR has achieved despite some major strategic, operational and governance limitations. Successes are a testament to the dedication and expertise of individuals across all the GNR entities. The GNR has frequently managed to respond to increased demands without an increase in resources until recently. This is not sustainable and there is a need to better align expectations, resources, and governance.

Moving forward: Since there is widespread agreement that the GNR is an essential resource for informing policies, investments and action on nutrition, it is vital and urgent that the GNR addresses the strategic and governance issues identified during this review. Failure to do so will put at risk the GNR's perceived independence, credibility and potentially its survival. There is a need for an inclusive process to build greater clarity and consensus on the issues identified in this report involving all GNR entities as well as representatives of target audiences and strategic partners.

Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	6
1.1 Objectives of mid-term review.....	6
1.2 Review questions.....	7
1.3 Methodological approach.....	8
1.4 Report structure.....	10
2.0 The Global Nutrition Report	11
2.1 History.....	11
2.2 Strategy and Theory of Change.....	11
2.3 Products and services	13
2.4 Target audience	14
2.5 Governance.....	15
2.6 Funding arrangements.....	17
3.0 GNR performance.....	18
3.1 Relevance	18
3.2 Coherence.....	23
3.3 Effectiveness.....	26
4.0 Factors determining performance	30
4.1 External factors.....	30
4.2 Strategy	30
4.3 Governance.....	32
5.0 Moving forward.....	35
5.1 Strategic planning process.....	35
5.2 2022 priorities.....	36
Annex One: Mid-term Review Terms of Reference.....	37

1.0 Introduction

The Stakeholder Group of the Global Nutrition Report (GNR) commissioned [Ecorys UK](#)² and [Chris Leather](#), co-founder of N4D³, to undertake an independent mid-term review in September 2021 ending in January 2022. The mid-term review is a timely assessment of the GNR's progress to date (2018–2021), ability to meet its audiences' needs and priorities and its added value to the nutrition community and beyond. The timeliness of the review also provides the opportunity for the findings and recommendations to inform and strengthen the GNR's future strategic vision (2021–2025).

1.1 Objectives of mid-term review

The original objectives of this mid-term review set out in the terms of reference (ToR) were threefold:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness, coherence and relevance of the GNR;
2. Understand whether any changes are needed to GNR's approach, products or services to deliver on the strategic vision for the GNR between 2021-2025;
3. Provide actionable recommendations that inform the design of the GNR for the future.

During the inception phase of this mid-term review, scoping interviews were conducted that highlighted key strategic and governance issues that the Stakeholder Group (SG), in consultation with the Independent Expert Group (IEG) and Host, agreed needed to be addressed in more detail during the mid-term review. As such, the scope and objectives of the mid-term review shifted to a focus on how the process (how the GNR is run, the strategy and the governance arrangements) influences the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the GNR. This mid-term review, therefore, focuses on understanding the opinion of a selection of stakeholders regarding the GNR's relevance, coherence and effectiveness and builds on this to highlight the issues the GNR needs to address to ensure its meeting its objectives in the future.

This report makes recommendations on how the GNR could address issues identified through a strategic planning process. This process would identify priorities for 2022 considering available resources and provide the opportunity to address issues arising from this mid-term review. The report builds on the views of interviewed stakeholders who provided options for addressing some of these issues. It is recognised that some options suggested by stakeholders potentially lead the GNR in different directions and will require participatory discussion and clear decision making in order to strengthen rather than weaken the GNR's impact. The report does not provide detailed recommendations on ways forward as it was only possible to interview a limited sample of stakeholders and it was concluded that ways forward need to be identified, discussed and agreed through an inclusive strategic planning process during which the views of a wider range of internal and external stakeholders should be heard.

This review builds on the work of the 2015-2016 mid-term evaluation undertaken by Dalberg.⁴ This evaluation included an assessment of how relevant and well accepted the GNR has been within the policy and advocacy environment; progress against indicators specified in the GNR Results Framework (outputs, intermediate outcomes and primary outcomes) using data gathered by the Host Organisation, triangulated with primary data collection; and included suggestions on how to improve the effectiveness

² Find out more about Ecorys UK here: [link](#).

³ Find out more about N4D here: [link](#).

⁴ *Review of the 2015 and 2016 Global Nutrition Reports* (2016) Dalberg, unpublished.

of the 2015 report in terms of advocacy and communications. The review did not include an assessment of the impact of the GNR.⁵

This mid-term review focuses on the period from 2018 when Development Initiatives (DI) began its formal role as the Host organisation.

1.2 Review questions

The main research questions (including the framing questions identified in the ToR for the review – see Annex One) have been organised by the overarching categories of **(1) relevance**; **(2) coherence**; and **(3) effectiveness** in line with the OECD-DAC definitions for these criteria.⁶ Since a main aim of the mid-term review is to generate learnings and recommendations for the GNR programme, a fourth overarching question specific to **(4) learning** was included which provides insights into whether aspects of the GNR should change to increase the programme's relevance, coherence and effectiveness.⁷

The main review questions and corresponding sub-questions are as follows:

1. **Relevance:** To what extent is the GNR dynamically responding to the needs and priorities of its main stakeholders?
 - Are the products and services provided by the GNR meeting the needs and priorities of its main stakeholders?
 - Does the GNR need to change in the future in responding to the changing external environment?
2. **Coherence:** How well does the GNR fit with, and is complementary to, activities from other actors working in the nutrition sector?
 - Where does the GNR sit in the wider ecosystem of actors working towards a world free from malnutrition?
 - What partnerships should the GNR sustain or develop within and beyond the nutrition community to more effectively achieve its objectives outlined in the strategic vision?
3. **Effectiveness:** To what degree is the GNR achieving its overall objectives and outcomes?
 - Are the products and services provided by the GNR influencing national and international action on malnutrition?
 - Are the products and services provided by the GNR disseminated successfully and in a timely manner?
 - Is the GNR seen as an effective accountability mechanism in driving progress to make tackling all forms of malnutrition a winnable fight across geographies and sectors?
4. **Learning:** Are there any changes needed to the programmes, governance, and funding arrangements to support the GNR's ambition for the future?

⁵ *Review of the 2015 and 2016 Global Nutrition Reports* (2016) Dalberg, unpublished.

⁶ *Evaluation Criteria*, OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, [link](#).

⁷ The fourth criteria of learning is not an OECD DAC evaluation criterion.

1.3 Methodological approach

The proposed methodological approach, as further detailed in the accompanying inception report for this mid-term review, was developed with the original objectives in mind (as stated in the mid-term review ToR). The proposed approach was centred on Contribution Analysis (CA) to build an understanding of (1) why observed changes have occurred and (2) the role played by the programme and (3) any other internal or external factors in creating this change.⁸

However, as the scope of the mid-term review changed following the inception phase, the methodological approach was adapted to align with the shift in focus. In addition, it became quickly evident during the document review that evidence on the contribution of GNR outputs to its outcomes was limited and stakeholders during scoping interviews were not able to provide concrete examples of contribution. This mid-term review, therefore, broadly follows Contribution Analysis as an approach, with a large focus on identifying internal and external factors that influence the GNR's performance.

The mid-term review comprised of four distinct methodological phases: **(1) initial research; (2) data collection; (3) analysis and validation** and **(4) reporting and dissemination**.

1. Initial research

The main objective for this initial research phase was to develop a strong understanding of the GNR and the priorities for the mid-term review. This was done by undertaking a light-touch desk review of key documents related to the GNR's progress, products and services, for example progress reports, logframes and the previous mid-term review. The review team also undertook scoping interviews to refine our understanding of the GNR and identify key areas of focus for the review.

2. Data collection

The data collection phase consisted of (1) an in-depth desk review building on the light-touch review, primarily consisting of documents relating to the strategy and programme governance and (2) key informant interviews (KIIs) with internal and external GNR stakeholders.

The sample of key informants was determined by a list of stakeholders built from knowledge of previous and current members of the GNR's Stakeholder Group, Independent Expert Group and the Host, as well as an initial mapping of external stakeholders. The list of stakeholders was further developed through a snowballing approach, particularly in relation to the primary audience category highlighted below.⁹ Given the short timeframe of this mid-term review, the review team were required to speak to stakeholders within a short period which ran over the United Nations Food Security Summit (UNFSS) and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit. The sample was therefore limited by the availability of stakeholders and the short timeframe. The review team would have preferred to speak more stakeholders, particularly representatives from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

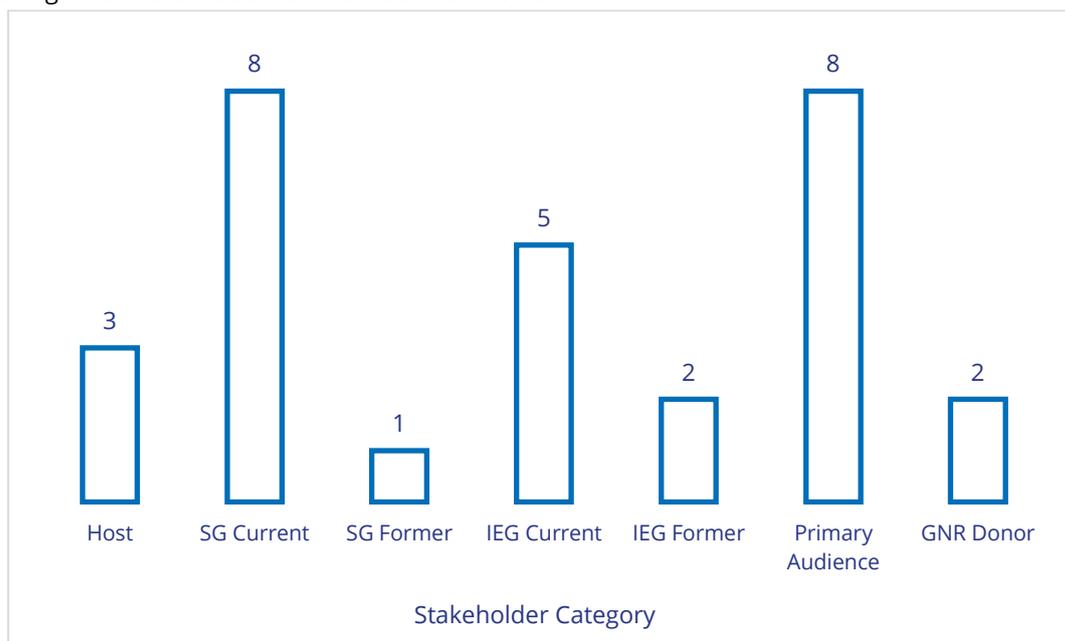
1. Desk Review: Building from the initial document review started during the initial research phase, we gathered and analysed key documents and data related both to GNR products and services and to GNR governance. This research activity allowed us to maximise the use of existing data and focus primary data collection on filling any gaps in evidence.

⁸ *Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect*, Mayne, J., [link](#).

⁹ A list of former and current Stakeholder Group and Independent Expert Group members was made available to the review team by the Host.

2. **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** We conducted 29 in-depth individual key informant interviews with key internal and external GNR stakeholders. The chart below outlines the stakeholders engaged during the data collection phase. As noted below, we presented emerging findings and recommendations to the wider SG and IEG members during the analysis and validation phase.

Figure 1: Categories of individual stakeholders interviewed



3. Analysis and validation

Following the desk review and KIIs, we analysed all the primary and secondary data relevant to the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and learning questions. All data was synthesised and triangulated into a common framework organised by the main review questions and sub-questions to verify and strengthen the analysis. The framework was used systematically to provide a comprehensive analysis across all data sources and stakeholder groups. As previously highlighted, data regarding the GNR's contribution to outcomes was limited, which therefore restricted the ability to conduct Contribution Analysis comprehensively in this review.¹⁰

This analysis enabled a thorough understanding of the external and internal factors that determine the performance and effectiveness of the GNR. Both secondary and primary data sources provided in-depth detail regarding the barriers and enablers of success, which have directly informed the findings and recommendations of this review, particularly in Section 4. A systematic approach was undertaken to identify the recommendations in Section 4: all primary data from key informant interviews were mapped to the review questions and recommendations that were congruent across stakeholder categories are presented in this report. Recommendations related to governance build on suggestions from internal GNR stakeholders and the review team's own assessment of ways of working and governance documentation.

The review team adopted an iterative approach to data collection, analysis and validation in order to maximise the accuracy, usefulness and timeliness of the mid-term review findings and recommendations. Hence, preliminary findings from the Initial Research phase were presented to the leads of the SG, IEG

¹⁰ See Section 3 for findings on the GNR's contribution to its objectives and outcomes.

and Host to highlight key strategic and governance issues emerging from the literature review and KIIs. This led to an extension of the mid-term review to enable more in-depth analysis of factors enabling and hindering GNR performance. Early in the data collection phase, the review team proposed to the SG that 2022 should be considered as a consolidation year during which the GNR could address key strategic, operational and governance constraints whilst also ensuring continued delivery and impact of priority GNR products and services. During the analysis and validation phase, draft findings and recommendations were presented to the wider SG and the leads of the IEG and Host with feedback incorporated into the first draft of the report. Following the dissemination of the first draft, a discussion was held with wider members of the IEG in order to receive their feedback which was incorporated into the final draft, as much as possible.

4. Reporting and dissemination

Reporting for this review consists of two main phases:

- **Drafting of main findings:** This report presents the main findings of the mid-term review, assessing the GNR's relevance, coherence and effectiveness. The report also highlights the main factors that have determined the GNR's performance and includes recommendations to help strengthen the GNR's future strategic approach.
- **Dissemination of the findings:** Once the report has been finalised following feedback from the GNR, the review team will support the GNR with dissemination of findings. A key aspect of this will be to ensure the findings have been shared with key stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process scheduled to take place in early 2022.

1.4 Report structure

The rest of this report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides an overview of the GNR, including its strategic aims, governance and funding arrangements.
- **Section 3** details the findings from the review. The findings in this section focus on the three review questions of relevance, coherence, and effectiveness.
- **Section 4** presents the external and internal factors that determine the GNR's performance, building on findings from the learning review question.
- **Section 5** suggests a series of activities to help the GNR build on and embed the findings and recommendations of this mid-term review.
- **Annex One** presents the terms of reference for the mid-term review.

2.0 The Global Nutrition Report

In this section, an overview of the Global Nutrition Report (GNR) is provided. It outlines the history to the GNR, its overall strategy, aims and objectives, products and services and its governance and funding arrangements.

The GNR aims to inspire governments, civil society, and private stakeholders to act to end malnutrition in all its forms. It aspires to provide an independent assessment of the state of global nutrition through the curation of high-quality and credible data on progress towards nutrition outcomes; the determinants of nutrition outcomes; commitments, policies and interventions designed to improve nutrition; and financing for nutrition. It seeks to contextualise data by in-depth analysis and expert opinion rooted in evidence to help drive action on nutrition where it is most urgently required.¹¹ The GNR aims to inform the nutrition debate through its analysis and inspire action to create a world free from malnutrition in all its forms.¹²

2.1 History

The GNR was established following the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G) in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by 100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN, and businesses. The first report was published in 2014 and has been published annually since, except in 2019. The GNR has since expanded in scope, growing to become the world's leading independent assessment of the state of global nutrition in the eyes of many stakeholders.¹³

The GNR was originally hosted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in 2014, under the leadership of Lawrence Haddad. The GNR was subsequently hosted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). In April 2017, Development Initiatives (DI) was contracted as a temporary Host to take on the responsibility of publishing the report for that year. DI was then formally contracted as the Host from April 2018 following a competitive tender process ran by the Stakeholder Group. DI remains the current Host of the GNR. As well as this transition in Host, the GNR has experienced several key personnel changes in recent years, all of which are documented below in relation to the governance of the GNR.

In 2015, the GNR commissioned its first mid-term review, undertaken by Dalberg prior to DI taking over the role of Host organisation from IFPRI.¹⁴ The review assessed how relevant and well-accepted the GNR has been within the policy and advocacy environment. Some recommendations from this mid-term review were adopted by the GNR which have fed into the development of the GNR's strategy structure and governance.

2.2 Strategy and Theory of Change

A strategic vision was developed in November 2018 when DI took over as Host to guide the strategy and outputs of the GNR until 2021. The GNR's vision was to help create a world free from malnutrition in all its forms and aimed to do this by creating accountability for greater action to end malnutrition.¹⁵ The Theory

¹¹ *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

¹² *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

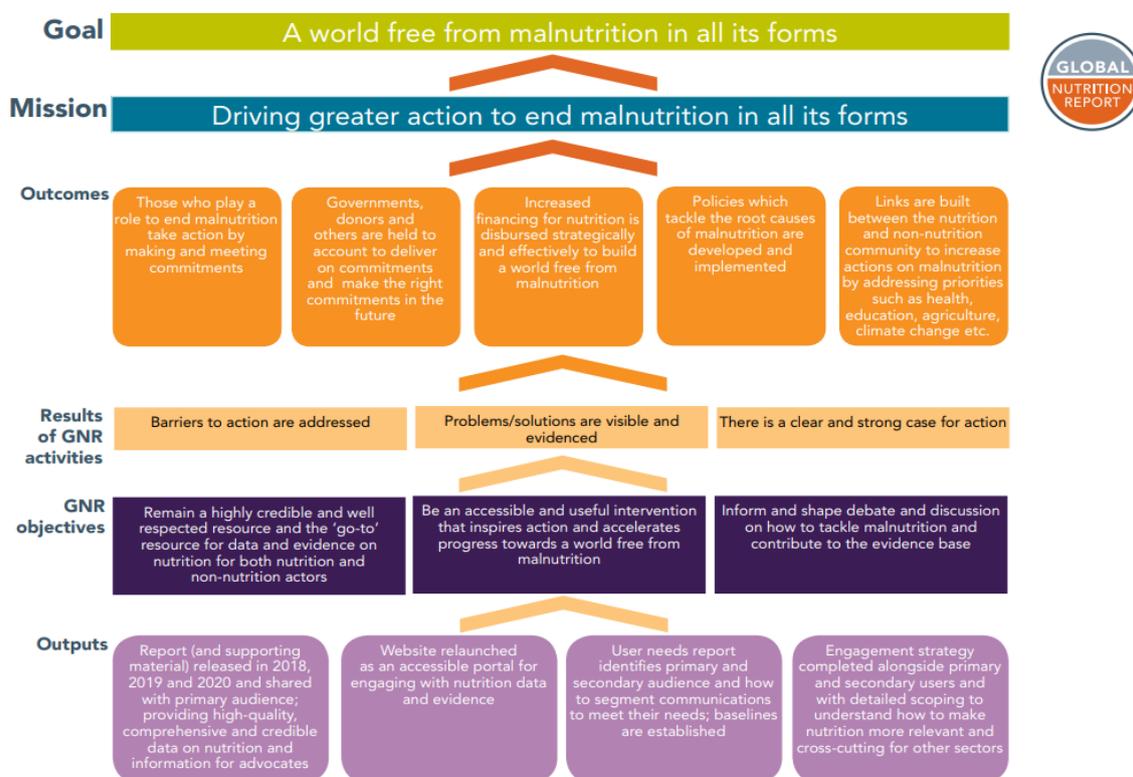
¹³ *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

¹⁴ *Review of the 2015 and 2016 Global Nutrition Reports* (2016) Dalberg, unpublished.

¹⁵ *Global Nutrition Report, Vision 2018-2021* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

of Change below details how the GNR sought to achieve this vision between 2018-2021.

Figure 2: GNR Theory of Change (2018–2021)¹⁶



An updated strategic vision has been created for the next programmatic phase of the GNR (2021-2025). This new strategic vision is very similar in scope to that of its predecessor. Both strategies aim to achieve “a world free from malnutrition in all its forms” and include the same mission: that the “GNR drives greater action to end malnutrition in all its forms”.¹⁷ The goal and objectives of the GNR for 2021-2025 have shifted slightly from the previous vision to the current vision with an explicit reference to becoming the main accountability mechanism for nutrition¹⁸:

Goal statement: To inform, shape and inspire action with data and evidence on policy, practice and financing which result in greater accountability and progress in tackling poor diets and malnutrition globally.

Objectives: The GNR will synthesise the best available data and evidence on nutrition into high-quality, actionable content. Through its role as an independent, credible and respected ‘go-to’ global resource and the accountability mechanisms for nutrition commitments, the GNR aims to:

1. Inform and inspire action by all stakeholders such as governments, donors, philanthropic organisations, civil society organisations, UN agencies, the private sector.
2. Shape debate and discussions, within both nutrition and other sectors, on how to tackle poor diets and malnutrition in all its forms.

¹⁶ *Global Nutrition Report, Vision 2018-2021* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

¹⁷ *Global Nutrition Report, Strategic Vision 2021-2025* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, provided within the Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference, Annex One, [link](#).

¹⁸ *Global Nutrition Report, Strategic Vision 2021-2025* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, provided within the Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference, Annex One, [link](#).

3. Improve the quantity, quality and equitable distribution of financing for nutrition.
4. Be the primary accountability mechanism for tracking progress against nutrition commitments and lead the Nutrition Accountability Framework.

The 2021-2025 vision makes explicit reference to the new Nutrition Accountability Framework (NAF) as a tool to help drive further action in addressing malnutrition and to ensure that the GNR is the primary accountability mechanism for actors in nutrition. The vision commits to undertaking monitoring and evaluation of the GNR's impact to enable a "continuous feedback loop that empowers the GNR to refine, adjust and strengthen its approach in real time and to inform specific evaluation and learning moments".¹⁹ This mid-term review will form a central part of this commitment to monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

2.3 Products and services

From its inception to 2018, the GNR published one annual report (both in paper and online). From 2018, the products and services of the GNR increased following recommendations from the previous mid-term review and with the start of DI's formal role as Host. DI's proposal to be the Host included implementing a revamp of the website to allow the GNR to move away from publishing one paper product to the ability to publishing multiple products online (for example the Country Nutrition Profiles and N4G tracking).²⁰ It also proposed to increase communications and engagement capacities to support the GNR produce content throughout the year, beyond the one report.

The GNR has now expanded to produce three key annual products:

- **An annual report**, focusing on reporting progress towards global nutrition targets and the analysis of progress towards the achievement of N4G commitments (2013/2017). Since 2017, the GNR produces in-depth analysis on a selected theme. This was an annual product until 2018 and became biannual in 2020 as the 2019 report was delayed. Since the introduction of the bi-annual themed report, the GNR also publishes a data update report during the years that a themed report is not developed. Rather than providing in-depth analysis on a theme, the data update report seeks to revise progress data related to global nutrition targets and N4G commitments (2013/2017).
- **Country Nutrition Profiles** (CNPs), presenting global, regional, subregional and country level data on dietary intakes and diet-related diseases, progress towards meeting the World Health Assembly (WHA) nutrition targets, as well as enacted food policies and guidelines, available online. The CNPs aim to enable users to immediately grasp a strong understanding of the state of malnutrition in a specific country, offering access to key information as well as recent trends and outstanding challenges.²¹
- **Nutrition for Growth Commitment Tracking**, providing a current, robust and trusted accountability mechanism to the Nutrition for Growth commitments made in 2013, and during the 2017 Global Nutrition Summit in Milan, available online.

The most recent product to be developed by the GNR is the **NAF**. The NAF aims to be the world's first

¹⁹ *Global Nutrition Report, Strategic Vision 2021-2025* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, provided within the Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference, Annex One, [link](#).

²⁰ *Hosting the Global Nutrition Report – the value Development Initiatives can add* (2018), unpublished.

²¹ *Global Nutrition Report, Vision 2018-2021* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

independent and comprehensive platform for registering SMART nutrition commitments and monitoring nutrition action.²² It was established in September 2021 during the run up to the Tokyo N4G Summit and emerged from the growing recognition of the urgency of addressing malnutrition. The GNR Strategy 2021-2025 outlines the expectation for the NAF to reinforce the GNR's role as the primary accountability mechanism for tracking progress against nutrition commitments.²³ The NAF will hold all data on commitments made for the Tokyo N4G Summit 2021 and progress made against them over time, and has been endorsed by the Government of Japan, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, USAID, and many other leading international actors and organisations.²⁴

2.4 Target audience

The GNR aims to reach and be used by a wide variety of actors and stakeholders. The GNR's products and services are designed to support nutrition advocates, policymakers, and people working in nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive roles. The GNR seeks to be of use to country-level actors and civil society organisations, as well as to individuals working at a global scale to combat malnutrition through organisations such as the UN and large, international civil society organisations. The latest strategic vision (2021-2025) outlines that it aims to inform, empower and/or influence a wide audience – primarily targeting the policy and advocacy community at the global, regional and national level. Specifically, the GNR's primary audience consists of ²⁵:

- The policy and advocacy community (global, regional and national)
- Officials in governments at all levels working to support improved nutrition and the end to malnutrition.
- Decision makers in governments and multilateral organisations (e.g., UN agencies), and parliamentarians.
- Nutrition/ food policy implementers.
- Nutrition donors (bilateral, multilateral and private).
- Think tanks, academics and researchers working to make the case to address poor diets and end malnutrition.
- Private sector organisations including in the food systems/ production and agri-food industry.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs).

The GNR also aims to indirectly influence and benefit secondary audiences, including²⁶:

- Media outlets that reach policy makers.
- General public interested in nutrition and development issues.
- Policymakers and advocates working in sectors that have a role to support improved nutrition, including agriculture, health, humanitarian, education, social protection, climate change sectors.

²² *The Nutrition Accountability Framework* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

²³ *Global Nutrition Report, Strategic Vision 2021-2025* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, provided within the Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference, Annex One, [link](#).

²⁴ *The Nutrition Accountability Framework* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

²⁵ *Global Nutrition Report, Strategic Vision 2021-2025* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, provided within the Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference, Annex One, [link](#).

²⁶ *Global Nutrition Report, Strategic Vision 2021-2025* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, provided within the Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference, Annex One, [link](#).

2.5 Governance

The GNR is a multi-stakeholder initiative which comprises three main entities: the Stakeholder Group (SG), the Independent Expert Group (IEG), and the Host organisation (currently DI).

The Stakeholder Group (SG)

The SG provides the overall strategic direction for the GNR as a global accountability mechanism, and aims to ensure that the GNR serves the needs of its stakeholders whilst holding the IEG accountable for content delivery.²⁷ Each year, it is the responsibility of the SG to develop a strategic framework and vision for the next report to be produced, determining the report's overall focus and theme and providing oversight to ensure that this vision is delivered.²⁸ Other responsibilities of the SG include agreeing on and overseeing the mechanism for delivery of the GNR, appointing the IEG Chair(s) and the Host organisation, and acting as a champion to build support and demand for the report in order to maximise its impact.^{29 30}

The SG meets quarterly and consists of representatives from the UN, civil society organisations, country governments, and donors.³¹ Private sector representatives were part of the SG until 2019 and have since not been replaced. The ToR for the IEG dictate that the SG must not contact individual members of the IEG (other than the Chair), and that IEG members must not contact SG members with regards to the GNR.³² Until very recently, the SG has been under the leadership of its Chair - Shawn Baker (Chief Nutritionist, USAID). Prior to Shawn Baker as Chair, Lucy Sullivan remained Chair of the SG from September to December 2020. Lawrence Haddad had been accepted as co-Chair with Lucy to start in September 2020 but had to pull out due to commitments for the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. Shawn took over as sole Chair from January 2021. Whilst Shawn remains incumbent as the SG Chair, Abigail Perry (Head of Nutrition, WFP) and Hannah Stephenson (Head of Hunger and Nutrition, Save the Children UK) have recently been introduced as co-Chairs to support Shawn with the management and oversight of the SG.

The Independent Expert Group (IEG)

The IEG is responsible for authoring all products under the GNR, and its Chair(s) lead the development of the GNR and its content. Additional responsibilities of the IEG, among others, include working with the Host to operationalise the vision set by the SG, scrutinising/improving the quality of the methods, data, analysis, interpretation, presentation and narrative of the GNR and to engage with processes of internal and external validation developed for the GNR.³³ Since the GNR's inception, there has been significant transition in the leadership of the IEG. The below highlights the timeline of the IEG leadership from the GNR's inception:

- Lawrence Haddad established the GNR in 2014
- Lawrence Haddad, Corinna Hawkes and Emorn Udomkesmalee are co-Chairs of the IEG from 2015-2016
- Lawrence Haddad steps down as co-Chair in late 2016
- Corinna Hawkes and Emorn Udomkesmalee are IEG co-Chairs from late 2016 and are joined by

²⁷ *Global Nutrition Report, Stakeholder Group Terms of Reference* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

²⁸ *Global Nutrition Report, Process, Roles and Responsibilities - Proposal for Stakeholder Group Review* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

²⁹ *Global Nutrition Report, Stakeholder Group Terms of Reference* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

³⁰ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

³¹ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

³² *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

³³ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

Jessica Fanzo in 2017

- Corinna Hawkes and Emorn Udomkesmalee step down as IEG co-Chairs at the end of 2018
- Between January and July 2019 there is a gap in IEG co-Chairs with Jessica Fanzo supporting but not formally a co-Chair
- Venkatesh Mannar joins as IEG co-Chair in July 2019
- Renata Micha joins as IEG co-Chair with Venkatesh Mannar from October 2019
- Renata Micha becomes sole IEG Chair in September 2020

The 2018 proposal for the SG Review dictated that the IEG should have two co-Chairs who are selected by a consensus vote of the SG, based on recommendations from a small selection committee convened by the SG co-Chairs.³⁴ One co-Chair ought to work full time on the report, whilst the responsibilities of the second co-Chair should include managing meetings and communications, assisting the Host in gathering data, providing quality assurance, supporting the launch of the report, and drafting and reviewing content.³⁵ Strategic discussions in the first half of 2020, resulted in a fundamental change to the leadership structure of the IEG (see timeline above).

Since Renata became the IEG's only Chair and sole authority, the IEG's ToR has been updated to describe the IEG Chair as "the ambassador for the GNR".³⁶ The responsibilities of this sole Chair include representing the GNR and the IEG externally, appointing IEG members through an open competitive process, and acting as the ultimate decision-maker on all matters related to the GNR and the IEG.³⁷ The IEG Chair is ultimately accountable to the SG for the quality and independence of the GNR's content and specified products. IEG members are appointed as individuals recognised for their expertise – they are not representatives of their particular profession, employer, or interest group, but rather have a duty to act in the interest of the GNR alone. Extended IEG members all have an advisory role to the IEG Core Group and may also assume additional roles based on their membership status.³⁸

The Host Organisation (Development Initiatives)

GNR documentation does not define the role or the expectations of the Host clearly. The Host organisation's role has expanded to meet the development of the GNR since 2018. DI's Director reports the current functions of DI to be:

1. Programme management
2. Donor relations, fundraising and donor reporting
3. Leads on communications and outreach including organising the launch events, engagement plan and comms strategy
4. Publication of the products online and offline
5. Data management and analysis support to the IEG
6. Admin support for the IEG and SG (meetings set up and minute taking)
7. Brand of GNR (management, development and custodian)

³⁴ *Global Nutrition Report, Process, Roles and Responsibilities - Proposal for Stakeholder Group Review* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

³⁵ *Global Nutrition Report, Process, Roles and Responsibilities - Proposal for Stakeholder Group Review* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

³⁶ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

³⁷ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

³⁸ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

A recent internal review of the GNR's governance arrangements highlights the increase in expectations, for example institutionalising N4G commitment tracking within the Host.³⁹ In the same review, it was discussed that the IEG should be accountable for content development and the Host accountable for publication, although it is also suggested that the Host have a central role in supporting the content. Whilst the IEG is responsible for content development, DI reviews, translates and publishes them in accordance with brand and with IEG Chair to ensure content meaning is not lost in any translation. It was also noted that DI needs to be flexible to the increased scope of the GNR, yet the budget available for the GNR Host between 2018 and 2020 has largely remained the same (see Section 2.6).⁴⁰⁴¹ The current Host agreement with DI holds until the end of 2025.

2.6 Funding arrangements

The delivery of the GNR is funded by its donors. The Donor Group - which is convened by the Host on a quarterly basis - provides financing for the GNR's products based on the strategy put forward by the SG.⁴² The Donor Group is also expected to increase the donor base to ensure project funding is sufficient for driving the best impact and act as champions for the report to help maximise research update.⁴³ It is the responsibility of DI as the Host to provide a regular annual report for all donors and to be accountable for the financial management of donor funding.⁴⁴ The IEG Chair joins donor calls to provide updates on the progress of content development of the GNR and to answer questions from the donors on its content and direction and relevance to policy areas.⁴⁵ IEG members are not expected to fundraise on behalf of the GNR or to participate in Donor Group meetings (with the exception of the IEG Chair(s)).⁴⁶ Measures to mitigate conflicts of interests include the stipulation that the Donor Working Group is advisory and having a firewall between the SG and IEG. The adequacy of such measures is considered in Section 4.3.

Due to the launch of the NAF and the GNR's role in the Tokyo N4G Summit, the GNR received an increase in funding in 2021, compared with the budget available between 2018-2020. However, between 2018 and 2020, the GNR's budget remained largely the same, despite increasing expectations to deliver⁴⁷:

- Between 2018 and 2019, the GNR's budget increased by 9%
- Between 2019 and 2020, the GNR's budget increased by 6%
- Between 2020 and 2021, the GNR's budget increased by 17%

³⁹ *Global Nutrition Report Governance Review Meeting Minutes* (2020), unpublished.

⁴⁰ *Global Nutrition Report Governance Review Meeting Minutes* (2020), unpublished.

⁴¹ *Global Nutrition Report: Progress Reports (2018-2020)*, unpublished.

⁴² *Global Nutrition Report Donor Group Terms of Reference* (2018), unpublished.

⁴³ *Global Nutrition Report Donor Group Terms of Reference* (2018), unpublished.

⁴⁴ *Global Nutrition Report, Process, Roles and Responsibilities - Proposal for Stakeholder Group Review* (2018) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

⁴⁵ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

⁴⁶ *Global Nutrition Report, Independent Expert Group Terms of Reference* (2021) Global Nutrition Report, [link](#).

⁴⁷ *Global Nutrition Report, Forecast Budget* (2018) unpublished.

3.0 GNR performance

This section presents the main findings from the mid-term review relating to the [relevance \(Section 3.1\)](#), [coherence \(Section 3.2\)](#) and [effectiveness \(Section 3.3\)](#) of the GNR. The findings relevant to the fourth review question on [learning](#) are provided in [Section 4](#).

3.1 Relevance

There is a strong demand from stakeholders at national, regional and global levels for (1) independent, rigorous data and analysis and (2) for this to be communicated in highly accessible ways for advocates and decision makers within and beyond the nutrition community.

There is strong appetite for a data-driven, independent report focused on the global trends of nutrition that can be used widely to both inform policymaking and advocate for action. Within an ever-changing external environment, stakeholders highlighted the importance of an initiative that consistently tracks progress against global WHA and NCD nutrition targets and can highlight where challenges remain. Ensuring the report and evidence provided is generated from an independent body, is seen to be critical to overcome political and ideological differences about how to best address malnutrition.

Not only is the independence seen as important, but specific emphasis was given to the need for relevant and concise messaging. Stakeholders highlighted that for academic evidence to have uptake and to inform policymaking, it must be shaped in a useable manner. Rather than long academic reports, stakeholders were keen to receive products that were tailored to their needs such as policy briefs, infographics, key messages and calls to action where relevant. Such products would have more use in practice as messaging would be clear and based on the academic rigour and methodologies used to generate the evidence. However, as discussed in more detail in Section 3.2 on coherence below, there were concerns among some stakeholders that the GNR, whilst being as policy relevant as possible, should avoid becoming policy prescriptive, otherwise its credibility as an independent, evidence-based entity could be compromised.

The GNR is widely regarded within the nutrition community as being useful, credible resource for meeting these needs. However, it is felt the GNR's full potential is not being met.

The GNR is particularly well-placed to meet the appetite for policy relevant data and evidence. The IEG is a body of academics, experts and practitioners that bring specific expertise and scientific rigour to assess data related to the state of global nutrition. The independence of the IEG was seen as a key asset to the GNR and key informants agreed that this must be protected for the GNR to be a relevant initiative within the nutrition ecosystem. Due to the global nature of the GNR and the IEG, there is potential to

mobilise a large audience to highlight the importance of nutrition.

The products of the GNR – the reports, country nutrition profiles, commitment tracking and the nutrition accountability framework – are all seen to be unique and add to the credibility of the GNR. Although the GNR builds on existing secondary data, for example from WHO and UNICEF, stakeholders appreciated the GNR’s ability to synthesise this data and highlight trends at the global level. Indeed, the GNR’s N4G tracking was also highlighted as a completely unique offer to the nutrition community. Stakeholders were, on the whole, positive about these products and appreciated the rigour of the evidence. The GNR’s focus on being an independent source of data and ability to publish numerous products each year adds to the nutrition community’s confidence in the report as a global reference source.

“The GNR is a tremendous tool in aiding civil society and identifying where policy and programmatic gaps are on nutrition in terms of investments, data and reporting.” (Civil society representative)

There was also widespread recognition of the recent expansion of the GNR, particularly with the establishment of the NAF during the Year of Action on Nutrition. The GNR has drastically expanded over the past three years (see Section 2.3), highlighting its ability to meet the growing needs of the nutrition community without a substantial increase of budget until 2021 (see Section 2.6).⁴⁸ Through the NAF, the GNR has provided guidance and assistance to support SMART commitments by all stakeholders making nutrition commitments, including governments, donors, civil society organisations, businesses, and others. The NAF’s support to strengthening commitments ahead of the N4G Summit has been seen as critical to catalyse action and highlight the importance of nutrition, as well as the importance of accountability in nutrition. The GNR’s role in the lead up to the N4G Summit, therefore, was widely commended and seen as fundamental to the success of the summit.

Despite the GNR’s role during the Year of Action, there was widespread impression that the GNR’s full potential is not being met. Stakeholders were convinced that the GNR can be a key actor in the nutrition ecosystem and that it can inform policymaking whilst also being a tool to call decision-makers to action.

The GNR’s target audience and stakeholders are wide-ranging with differing needs and priorities but it is unclear how the GNR meets these diverse needs.

The current strategic vision of the GNR (2021-2025) identifies the target audience and stakeholders for its products and services. This list contains a huge diversity of stakeholders, all with differing needs and priorities that require tailored messaging to drive action on malnutrition in all its forms. However, there is a lack of detail in the strategic vision outlining how the GNR will respond to the needs of each stakeholder group. This lack of clarity was reflected during stakeholder engagement: key informants were unclear who the main target audience group of the GNR is and whether the GNR has undertaken any systematic needs assessment to inform its strategy.

The GNR also states in its strategic vision that it will undertake research to understand how its services and products are being used by key stakeholders and target audiences, which will help to inform how the GNR can be improved to meet the needs. However, the GNR has not adequately undertaken

⁴⁸ GNR Progress Reports highlight that the budget available in 2018, 2019 and 2020 largely remained the same. In 2021, the budget increased to reflect the development and launch of the NAF and the GNR’s involvement in Tokyo N4G Summit in 2021.

participatory and consultative needs assessments nor research to understand which products and services are being used.

The GNR's relevance is declining in wider policy processes such as climate change, food systems, COVID-19 recovery, and pandemic prevention. The GNR is regarded by some as inadequately responsive to changes in the external environment and political opportunities to promote nutrition.

The past two years have seen seismic and unprecedented events that have impacted global nutrition and could have been leveraged by the GNR to highlight its relevance within nutrition and beyond. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an overwhelming impact on most sectors and the uncertainty around its disruption to people's lives has been well documented.⁴⁹ This is no exception for nutrition.⁵⁰ However, stakeholders felt that the GNR could have done more to highlight the negative impact of the pandemic on nutritional outcomes. Although the GNR did include a summary of why equitable, resilient, and sustainable food and health systems were more important than ever in the face of COVID-19, stakeholders expected the GNR to have more visibility in informing action on nutrition during the pandemic through its various products and services. It is noteworthy that a separate initiative, Standing Up Together for Nutrition, was created to analyse both the impact of malnutrition on health outcomes during the pandemic and the impact of COVID-19 on nutrition. Some key informants believe that the GNR should have been well-placed to play this role but failed to do so.

Relatedly, there have been political opportunities that the GNR could have leveraged to highlight the importance of nutrition and attempt to catalyse further action. The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) for example, were significant global events that received widespread attention both within the development community and beyond. Stakeholders noted that the GNR was not adequately visible during these important summits, failing to showcase the interconnectedness between nutrition, food systems and climate change.

The GNR is insufficiently leveraging its independence to inform contentious policy issues.

The independence of the GNR is fundamental to its relevance. However, it is felt by some that the GNR could leverage this independence even further to address and inform contentious policy issues that require an objective, data-driven stance. The UNFSS highlighted the diverse range of views on effective policy solutions required to address food systems, diets and malnutrition, not least around the role of multi-national corporations, agriculture and trade policies. The GNR has addressed such issues in its reports; however, some key informants believe it could be presenting more salient evidence from different contexts to highlight the role of the private sector and the impacts of different policies.

“Having the authority of the GNR is really useful.” (Civil society representative)

There are concerns that the GNR's messaging does not provide adequate attention to the range of determinants of, and responses to, malnutrition.

There is a perception amongst some stakeholders that in recent years the GNR has given inadequate attention to the health determinants of undernutrition (including access to health care, water, and

⁴⁹ *Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods, their health and our food systems: Joint statement by ILO, FAO, IFAD and WHO* (2020) World Health Organisation, [link](#).

⁵⁰ *The impact of COVID-19 on diet quality, food security and nutrition in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review of the evidence*, (2021) Picchiono, F., Goulao, L., Roberfroid, D., [link](#).

sanitation) as the GNR has increasingly focussed on food system and diet related drivers of malnutrition and the growing problem of obesity. Addressing malnutrition in all its forms is widely regarded as necessary for the GNR but increases the complexity of the GNR's subject matter, analytical approach, and messaging. Whilst it may be necessary to focus in on certain aspects of the global nutrition challenge within individual publications and outputs, the GNR needs to be careful to ensure that thematic analysis is always linked to GNR's overall data and evidence on the drivers of, and solutions to, malnutrition. On the other hand, some stakeholders questioned whether high income countries and the problem of overnutrition should be part of the GNR's remit given constrained resources. As with other issues identified during this review, there are diverse views which need reconciling.

The NAF has potential to improve accountability but lack of clarity on GNR's role and approach.

The GNR has played a useful role in tracking delivery on commitments made during Nutrition for Growth events in between 2013 and 2017. The development of the NAF is regarded as a logical evolution of this role for GNR. Although the NAF has been seen as a useful tool to galvanise SMART commitments ahead of the Tokyo N4G Summit, there was lack of clarity among stakeholders regarding the GNR's role. Stakeholders commented that, while the NAF is potentially useful to improve accountability, it is not clear how the GNR will maintain this role. This is discussed further in Section 3.2 below.

Additionally, it is not clear how the NAF will help achieve the GNR's overall mission statement to end malnutrition in all its forms. This is mainly due to the lack of theory of change for the GNR's next strategic phase (2021-2025) to detail how the NAF as an output will contribute to the outcomes and mission of the GNR. The previous strategic phase (2018-2021) did include a theory of change, but this was before the development and launch of the NAF. It is positive that the NAF has been developed to address the gaps within the previous theory of change, particularly around how the GNR will achieve greater accountability, but more strategic thinking is needed to highlight the NAF's specific role in the GNR and the causal assumptions that exist.

The reports are viewed as useful for informing advocacy and policy, but their relevance is perceived to be limited by an overly academic tone, length and global scope.

It was widely agreed that the reports produced by the GNR are useful materials to inform advocacy efforts and are very informative. However, there was consensus that the relevance of the reports is declining due to the academic tone and length. One stakeholder described the report as being 'very dense' and difficult to navigate. One donor noted that this was a significant reason for the GNR's overall decline in relevance within the sector. A balance is needed between the rigour of the evidence generated and the relevance of the GNR's messaging. One IEG member was keen to highlight that the

purpose of the GNR is to inform action through its useful and concise messaging; however, with the focus on academic rigour, the GNR's purpose is often lost.

Stakeholders noted the GNR data update reports are useful to an extent but highlight that such regular publication risks diluting messaging. It was also recognised that the data update reports still require a large amount of human – and therefore financial - resource that could have better value for money if it was spent on strengthening the bi-annual themed reports to ensure salient messaging.

“Sometimes the themes are not always very usable, and it is a very dense paper. The messaging could be improved to help with usability.” (Audience member)

Suggestions to improve the tone of the report included focusing on regional and country materials, which would also strengthen the relevance of the messaging of the report at all levels. This closely aligns with recommendations for the GNR to strengthen its partnerships and relationships with both nutrition and non-nutrition actors (see Sections 3.2 and 4.2) in order to appeal to a broader audience. Similarly, it was highlighted that the GNR could explore publishing articles in academic peer reviewed journals, such as *The Lancet*, thereby allowing an increased focus on policy relevance in GNR reports. The reports could

then have more space to explore specific issues related to a theme and/or region/country and use this to create policy briefs that would include calls to action and targeted recommendations. Such adaptations were discussed in 2019, but it is not clear whether these will be actioned soon.⁵¹

To help improve the relevance of the GNR, communications and marketing has been a focus for the host organisation. In 2018, a new communications agency was commissioned to launch the GNR. Due to this support, the communications strategy and outcomes for 2018 significantly improved on the 2017 campaign. The strategy included a geographically tailored approach that led to media coverage in 52 countries, covering every continent, and with stories in 16 languages in the seven days from launch.⁵² Although this is positive, other stakeholders have noted that the communications strategy of the GNR could be strengthened, particularly at the country-level (see Section 3.3).

Country nutrition profiles are strong on progress against targets but inadequately highlight examples of success and enabling and hindering factors, thereby limiting their relevance for decision making and support.

Country nutrition profiles (CNPs) were reportedly seen as useful tools to highlight progress against targets by many stakeholders. Following their 2018 launch, the CNPs were visited by 27,000 people from January to December 2019, an eightfold increase from the year before.⁵³ Donors and advocacy organisations highlighted that they have previously used CNPs to understand a country's progress against global targets and get further information regarding specific indicators. One civil society representative described the CNPs as “tremendous” products. The GNR's ability to report on all indicators of malnutrition is seen as a strong asset, particularly when this is disaggregated in each CNP. Such level of detail was seen as important for advocacy work, for example in Thailand, where the CNP was shown to the Ministry of Health to highlight where focus was needed to improve nutritional indicators.

However, many stakeholders were keen to see the CNPs go further with the analysis to provide more detail on examples of success and enabling and hindering factors. Rather than only providing data on the progress against targets, additional analysis that investigated the barriers to progress could be used

⁵¹ *Global Nutrition Report, Production Cycle: 2020 onwards* (2019) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

⁵² *GNR Progress Report: April 2018-March 2019* (2019) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

⁵³ *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

by advocates and policymakers at the country level. For example, focusing on the political economy of progress – or lack thereof – in relation to nutrition targets could help to increase the relevance and use of the CNPs in informing decision-making.

3.2 Coherence

There is widespread agreement that the GNR adds significant value within the wider nutrition ecosystem but there is consensus that it needs to be increased.

In the eyes of all stakeholders consulted, the GNR has clear added value within the global nutrition ecosystem in that it can provide independent, rigorous data and evidence and communicate it in ways which inform nutrition policies and actions at country, regional and global levels. As discussed in the sections on relevance and effectiveness this value could be further increased.

On the other hand, it is also widely agreed that there is a need to clarify the limits to the GNR's role in advocacy and accountability within the wider ecosystem and where it needs to develop its strategic partnerships with other actors who input into the GNR and/or utilise its products. The need for clarification is interlinked with the lack of core strategic activities that help to identify the role of a programme. Although there is a strategic vision for 2021–2025, the GNR has not produced a theory of change that clearly highlights how it intends to achieve its primary objectives.

There is a lack of clarity about how far the role of the GNR extends into advocacy.

Stakeholder perceptions of the extent to which the GNR's role should and does extend into advocacy vary considerably. Some argue that the role of the GNR should be limited, presenting evidence and highlighting its relevance to policy but without being policy prescriptive as it is feared that this will compromise perceptions of independence and credibility. This position is comparable with the approach of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) whose "assessments are policy-relevant but not policy prescriptive: they may ... discuss the implications of response options, but they do not tell policymakers what actions to take".⁵⁴ Audience members noted that it is the role of other actors, including civil society, rather than of the GNR, to try and drive change by taking GNR and other evidence to governments. It was also highlighted that it is not pragmatically feasible for the GNR to tailor its content to meet the needs of all advocacy actors; one audience member noted that it should be the advocate that "package[s] information for themselves".

Others argue that for the GNR to be impactful it needs to go further with the policy implications and increase its direct engagement with policy makers. For example, one IEG member suggested that the GNR must prioritise advocacy work and believes that if this element is lost then the purpose of the GNR is lost. Some felt that the GNR needs to be bolder in its recommendations, and that the GNR could even play a role in enforcing commitments through utilising soft power, for example developing a scorecard highlighting those that are not meeting commitments made. There was a feeling amongst these stakeholders that the GNR should actively influence action in an evidence-based way, though it was noted that limited capacity will likely prevent the GNR from taking forward a strong advocacy agenda. Audience members felt that the GNR's advocacy role could be enhanced through providing materials in different languages that provide guidance on promoting the GNR's recommendations and messaging to directly influence policymaking.

⁵⁴ IPCC factsheet: what is the IPCC?, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [link](#)

These differences in opinion are partially due to different interpretations of what 'advocacy' entails. One former SG member suggested that "presenting recommendations based on research" does not constitute advocacy, whilst other stakeholders appeared to believe that advocacy is at the heart of the GNR and includes much of the work which the GNR already undertakes. Ultimately, there is a need to clarify where the GNR's advocacy role ends, how to maximise the policy relevance of its evidence without being policy prescriptive and perceived to be aligned with certain policy positions or interests.

The NAF has the potential to strengthen GNR's accountability role, but there is a lack of clarity about how the GNR will track delivery on commitments, how it will communicate progress and how it will link with other mechanisms to help accelerate progress on delivery.

Stakeholders were optimistic about the launch of the NAF and felt that this new tool has the potential to give more impetus and energy to the GNR's accountability efforts. As discussed above in Section 3.1, the NAF is perceived as a strengthened commitment tracking service with a renewed focus on accountability, rather than as an accountability mechanism in and of itself. Stakeholders noted the value of having commitments collated in an organised way and are confident that civil society actors will look to the NAF for advocacy information. The GNR is perceived as being best placed to maintain ownership over a tool such as the NAF given its expertise, though a lack of resources was once again flagged as a potential barrier to the GNR's ability to maximise the potential of this new tool in tackling malnutrition. Key informants consider that commitment tracking has been a core tenet of the GNR's work since its inception, and stakeholders view the expansion of this commitment tracking role through the NAF as a positive step.

There is some doubt, however, as to whether the GNR should be playing an accountability role through the NAF. The GNR can present commitments and analyse who is on track to meet these commitments, but it is not able to play a policing role as it is not mandated to do so. Whilst the GNR recognises that its role does not extend into policing, the ambiguity surrounding the GNR's precise intentions for the NAF has raised questions about its purpose. One stakeholder highlighted that the added value of seeking smarter commitments is not always clear to stakeholders, as the strategy underpinning the NAF itself is unclear. As one SG member observed, in recognition of the fact that the NAF can only be a commitment tracking tool and nothing more if the GNR is to retain its impartiality, the NAF has "no carrot and no stick". It is therefore not clear to some stakeholders whether and how the NAF aims to hold agencies, businesses, and stakeholders to account.

To clarify the purpose of the NAF and ensure its alignment with the GNR's broader strategic vision, the GNR will need to clearly set out how the NAF intends to track delivery on commitments. Stakeholders suggested that the NAF could provide score cards for actors which rate their progress against commitments, allowing civil society representatives to then call out governments and other actors based on this information. If the GNR is hesitant to lean directly into advocacy itself, a framework such as this would provide a useful way to leverage the power of civil society without compromising the GNR's independence and impartiality. Stakeholders also stressed the importance of integrating the country-perspective into the NAF to assess the enablers and barriers of progress within specific countries. It was noted that countries sometimes need more support to develop capacity on data and monitoring before they can make or report on commitments. Stakeholders are hopeful that if governments make country-specific commitments and are being observed by an international tracking

mechanism - rather than just by in-country observers - they will be more inclined to meet these commitments.

Stakeholders also identified the risk of the NAF duplicating the efforts of other existing accountability mechanisms. Audience members drew attention to the work of the WHO in helping countries with developing capacities to report on commitments; the NAF must be careful to avoid duplication of this work. Audience members stated that it would be useful if the NAF communicated with other accountability and commitment tracking tools - such as the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) accountability mechanisms - to ensure that the various tools fit together and complement one another, rather than replicating each other's work.⁵⁵ It was suggested that a further tool to collate commitments made across these different mechanisms and organise them into one database would be valuable. This would allow advocates to search for a government and easily pinpoint all commitments made across various relevant tracking mechanisms.

The GNR's partnerships with the academic and advocacy community need strengthening.

Key informants suggested that the GNR needs to further develop both its upstream and downstream partnerships. Upstream partners relate to data generators (researchers, academics and programme evaluators), giving particular importance to in-country knowledge generators that could be utilised across all of GNR's products. Downstream partners are those that use and translate the GNR's global analysis and messaging and develop policies and actions (advocates and corresponding networks).

It was suggested that the GNR could work with specific downstream advocacy partners to design and tailor content which speaks to their needs, building on content produced by the NAF on progress to commitments. The GNR could, for example, produce templates to be taken forward by national advocates or co-design content with advocates. Stronger partnerships with country-level think tanks, academic institutions and civil society networks were also suggested as potential ways to strengthen linkages with the advocacy community. It was also recommended that the GNR partner with international research institutes and platforms, such as Global Index and IFPRI (the GNR's former Host). Audience members felt that these organisations could help to facilitate the production of regional-level data and evidence, which would strengthen the support that the GNR is able to provide to country-level advocates.

Relatedly, the GNR needs to be more strategic about the relationships it builds with upstream partners and these relationships can be utilised. Audience members felt that the GNR could take better advantage of the relationships which IEG members have with other organisations, and strategically partner on certain pieces with these organisations to highlight the importance of nutrition. The GNR ought to think more intentionally about where and how it releases new findings, taking care to package and share data in a relevant and accessible way. The GNR should, for example, identify and prioritise specific advocates that can effectively use the findings and tailor content around partnerships with these key organisations. Building further on the identified need to increase cross-sector collaboration, stakeholders felt that the GNR should build stronger partnerships with non-nutrition agencies to ensure that it reaches beyond the nutrition community. One audience member even proposed the idea of a

⁵⁵ The Nutrition for Growth Accountability Working Group was established ahead of the N4G Summit and aims to increase coherence of accountability mechanisms across the nutrition sector. The GNR is a member of this working group. For more information, please see the *Nutrition for Growth Accountability Working Group* (2021), [link](#).

non-nutrition interest group (like the SDG2 Advocacy Hub) could help to inform content that speaks to cross-sector needs.

In discussing the GNR's strategic partnerships, stakeholders frequently focused on the relationship between the GNR and SUN Movement. There is agreement that more effective collaboration between the two entities is needed to avoid duplication of services and strengthen their contribution to driving action on malnutrition. The SUN Joint Annual Assessments (JAA) were noted as a product which could be aligned more closely with GNR products such as the CNPs.

Stakeholders felt that further linkage between the GNR and SUN would allow the two organisations to pool their resources, thereby providing them both with more specific data and evidence on their nutrition objectives. It was noted that further collaboration with SUN would not restrict the GNR from reporting on non-SUN countries but would provide a richer overview of nutrition data for those countries which are targeted by both SUN and the GNR. Partnering more with SUN could also facilitate the introduction of more Southern country voices into the GNR, and SUN networks could prove especially helpful for the GNR in promoting the CNPs.

“There is currently no connection between the GNR and SUN. GNR profiles and the JAAs sometimes tell us different stories - there should be coordination so civil society advocates and media do not get confused with mixed messages and mixed data.” (Audience member)

3.3 Effectiveness

The GNR is regarded as of high quality and seen as the world leading, go-to resource for best available data and evidence on global nutrition; however, there is limited evidence to suggest that the GNR directly informs and inspires action.

It was consistently reported that the GNR is a useful tool to understand the global state of nutrition. Preliminary findings from an online survey of 177 nutrition stakeholders by John Hopkins University revealed the GNR to be the most frequently accessed and used tool by these stakeholders.⁵⁶ Additional examples demonstrate that the GNR is widely referenced and gains visibility during launch events. During the launch of the report in Bangkok in 2018, for example, the GNR was referenced by Édouard Ngirente, Prime Minister of Rwanda, Zinash Tayachew, First Lady of Ethiopia, and Inonge Wina, Vice President of Zambia. After the 2020 launch of the GNR, the WHO⁵⁷ and WFP⁵⁸ published press releases drawing on key findings and messages included in the report. The Lancet Global Health also featured the report in the monthly editorial edition.⁵⁹ Such recognition that the GNR is a highly credible resource is positive.

Despite the positive consensus, there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate the GNR is achieving its outcomes and objectives in relation to inspiring action and informing and shaping the discussion on how to tackle malnutrition. Most stakeholders were unable to provide concrete examples of how they have used GNR products and messaging to influence policymakers. Civil society representatives and other audience members noted that this was mainly due to the disconnect between the global nature of the report and the need for tailored messaging for advocacy work at the country-level. One country stakeholder described the GNR as being globally relevant but was not an effective mechanism to drive

⁵⁶ *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

⁵⁷ *Coronavirus - Africa: COVID-19 could deepen food insecurity, malnutrition in Africa*, WHO Regional Office for Africa, May 2020, [link](#).

⁵⁸ *Coronavirus threatens global surge in malnutrition, jeopardizing future of an extra 10 million children*, WFP, May 2020, [link](#).

⁵⁹ *Food insecurity will be the sting in the tail of COVID-19*, The Lancet Global Health, June 2020, [link](#).

action on nutrition within the country due to the limited avenues available to shape global messaging to a country-specific context. Similarly, a different country representative admitted that they use data and sources generated by their Ministry of Health and national institutes as the data is more relevant for their advocacy and decision-making purposes. This highlights that a key obstacle for the GNR's effectiveness relates to the limited opportunities for knowledge exchange at a more local level, where policymakers and advocates can use the GNR outputs to influence action on nutrition.

Although the Country Nutrition Profiles are a useful mechanism to overcome the global nature of the GNR and the need for country-specific data, stakeholders noted that the messaging and calls to action need to also be tailored to each context. This resonates with recommendations from stakeholders regarding how to increase the relevance of products at the country-level, providing additional analysis that would assist advocacy efforts and therefore help to drive the GNR's effectiveness. Additionally, improving partnerships at the country-level would also help to increase the GNR's effectiveness as duplication between data sources could be mitigated and relationships with advocacy networks could be stronger.

The GNR is inadequately leveraging the synergies between nutrition and other issues in its messaging, engagement and dissemination.

Two strong themes emerged in relation to how improved effectiveness should be achieved: the GNR should probe deeper into country-level analysis to provide further support to actors at the country level, and the GNR should take measures to integrate more of a multi-sectoral perspective into its work and products.

The full realisation of GNR's goals is dependent on the ability of the GNR to provide accessible and useful information at a country level. Civil society and country representatives alike highlighted that the GNR needs to go further in providing country-level support alongside its data and analysis to help with uptake of the GNR's findings and messaging. Such support would equip the GNR's primary audience to advocate for progress on nutrition at the country-level and help bridge the gap between the global nature of the report and the goals it aims to achieve within countries.

“They [the GNR] have been good in providing data, but they have to move forward in supporting country governments and advocates like us in developing policy briefs and other materials.”
(Civil society representative)

A recommendation from these stakeholders was that the GNR could provide ‘side products’ targeted towards actors at the country-level to “make the data more useful”, particularly in the prioritisation of interventions that evidence demonstrates are high impact. Audience members proposed that these side products could take the form of country-specific follow-up suggestions to accompany and contextualise data, or guidance on how countries could deliver reports for different audiences such as policy leads, scientific leads, and the media. These additional outputs could be disseminated through country or regional partnerships developed by the GNR to help increase research uptake.

“Data is very important but knowing how to make the data speak to policymakers is even more important. If there is no mechanism to deliver messages from the report itself to policymakers involved in nutrition and development process, then it makes no sense.” (Audience member)

Stakeholders from both within and beyond the nutrition community agreed that the GNR should prioritise efforts in integrating perspectives beyond the nutrition sector into its messaging. There is a perceived need amongst audience members for the GNR to better utilise synergies with other sectors to increase its relevance and drive action at the national and local level. One civil society representative with strong environmental expertise highlighted that the GNR is currently of limited value for environmental policymakers but could be a useful mechanism to highlight the interconnectedness between nutrition and the environment. For example, it was suggested that the GNR needs to integrate environmental stability into its nutrition work and include some environmental considerations in its report and products to break down the existing silos. Given that this has been done by the GNR in its previous two reports, it is noteworthy that this stakeholder was not aware of the GNR's work in this area. Similarly, it was highlighted that the GNR could exploit synergies with other sectors through having a presence at international summits aside from N4G, such as COP26, UNFSS, UNCCD, the Biodiversity Summit, and Stockholm50+.

“We’ve been talking for years about why it’s important to invest in and programme nutrition in multi-sectoral ways, but we don’t always talk to other sectors in the community.” (Audience member)

The GNR is reaching a large audience through its dissemination strategy, but further consideration is needed to ensure broader coverage.

The GNR has strengthened its dissemination strategy since its inception which has caused an improvement in coverage. In 2020, the launch of the report reportedly reached more people across social media channels, driving more people to the website and building increased awareness of the products and services available that year.⁶⁰ A social media toolkit was also developed, shared and presented to more than 50 global and national partners through briefings that provided recommended posts and hashtags, creative materials and tips for actors to share GNR messaging.⁶¹ This investment led to high-profile individuals and organisations sharing GNR content and messaging; however, it is not clear whether this led to sustained online engagement or impacted decision-making.

“Engagement is about understanding what the audience needs – we need to think about what the GNR can do differently.” (SG member)

Additionally, the GNR has leveraged its partnerships with relevant actors to disseminate its messaging. During the SUN Global Gathering in 2019, the GNR participated in several workshops with contributions to discussions from IEG members.⁶² The GNR also had strong visibility through its partnership and engagement with the N4G Summit in Tokyo, particularly in relation to the NAF and technical assistance regarding SMART commitments. However, country representatives noted that more could be done to partner

with country-level organisations to help disseminate products and distribute relevant messaging. This could include webinars or roundtable events with high-profile country stakeholders. It was also advised that GNR should collaborate with country-level actors to translate products and messaging into local languages. Currently, the GNR products are only published in three languages (English, French and Spanish), which is seen as a key barrier to effective dissemination.

It is the responsibility of the Host to lead on the communications and outreach events. However, it became clear during the mid-term review that the capacity of the Host organisation could be increased and additional support could be provided by the SG and IEG to adequately address the current gaps in

⁶⁰ *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

⁶¹ *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

⁶² *GNR Progress Report: April 2019-March 2020* (2020) Global Nutrition Report, unpublished.

the GNR's dissemination efforts. Not only would this provide additional resource to organise dissemination events, but it would also allow for more creative and engaging opportunities for audience members. A clearer understanding of what dissemination activities audience members at global, regional, and country levels would benefit from would also help the Host organisation improve the dissemination strategy.

Regional and country launches of products and services have strengths but are limited by a lack of sustained and ongoing engagement.

Ahead of the publication of the GNR's products, a series of launch events are held to ensure visibility and understanding. Recently, there have been several launch events in relation to the NAF with the aim to inform the GNR's audience about the objectives of the NAF and also provide instructions with how to use the framework and its benefits, particularly during the run up to the N4G Summit in December 2021. Additionally, press releases are also published alongside the annual reports with the aim of increasing accessibility and coverage at regional and national levels.

Such dissemination events and materials have been positively received and stakeholders agree that they communicate key messages for regional and country stakeholders. However, country-level representatives recommended that additional activities could be undertaken to increase and sustain the GNR's coverage. Some warned that launch events were often 'one-off' activities and additional learning events could help to highlight the relevance of the GNR's products at country-level. For example, tailored seminars and webinars relating to specific regions and/or countries could be useful engagement exercises that would overcome the disconnect between the global messaging and the need for context-specific findings. Workshops facilitated by the GNR could be useful fora for regional and country stakeholders to discuss how GNR's messages could be applied to their specific context. It was generally agreed by country representatives that the GNR should invest in a series of tailored waterfall of activities following launch events to help increase engagement at the local level.

4.0 Factors determining performance

This section presents findings and recommendations relating to key factors that enable or hinder GNR's performance under three main headings: firstly "external" followed by two subsections relating to internal factors: "strategy" and "governance".

4.1 External factors

It is argued by some key informants that, compared to 10 or 15 years ago, nutrition has limited political traction as a standalone issue and needs to be promoted as pre-requisite for achieving wider development goals and a priority within sectoral and other multi-sectoral strategies and plans (e.g. health, COVID-19 recovery, climate emergency, food systems). What might be seen as a declining relevance of nutrition makes it more challenging for the GNR to maintain its own relevance. This is even more the case, given the proliferation of actors and products across different thematic issues relevant to nutrition. Adding to pre-existing issues, the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly affected the external landscape as well as GNR's own ways of working, reducing opportunities for face-to-face meetings which are essential for developing common understanding and trust. In turn, this increasingly crowded landscape means there is increasing competition for donor resources, while at the same time these resources are declining. On the other hand, there is strong demand from current and potential audiences for independent, evidence-based analysis to inform policies and actions and plenty of goodwill for the GNR to succeed.

4.2 Strategy

Whilst there is widespread agreement amongst stakeholders on the ambition and role of the GNR in providing highly credible and respected data and evidence to inform debate and action on nutrition, there is a lack of agreement and strategic clarity on the limits to its role, how it can most effectively perform it and the strategic partnerships required with other actors to maximise its value within the global nutrition ecosystem. Building on the findings presented above, this section outlines the key strategic issues which the GNR needs to address to improve its relevance, coherence and effectiveness.

Develop wider consensus on GNR's role and added value within the global nutrition ecosystem.

As presented in Section 3, there is a need to clarify the extent of the GNR's role in relation to both advocacy and accountability, taking into account the roles and capacities of other actors within the global nutrition ecosystem. This clarity on roles should then lead to a clearer definition of the desired outcomes of the GNR and definitions of success. The GNR should consider whether success is defined by GNR's direct impacts on policies and financial investments or, in a more limited way, by the extent to which GNR products and services are appreciated and utilised by advocates and decision makers to inform decisions and actions. The GNR needs to clearly position itself within both an overall theory of change for ending malnutrition and the wider global nutrition landscape.

Clarify target audiences.

As a consequence of the lack of clarity on the GNR's role, there is a lack of clarity about the key target audiences: are they advocates, decision makers or both? Are they within the nutrition community, beyond it or both? Views on the answers to these questions depend on opinions regarding GNR's role and intended outcomes. The relevance of GNR products could be improved through more regular and

systematic reviews of the priorities and needs of priority target audiences, particularly actors at country-level. It will be important to ensure that there is adequate representation from key audiences in GNR governance as discussed further below.

Develop more strategic partnerships with other stakeholders and more systematically and routinely assess needs and priorities of GNR users/partners.

Greater clarity on GNR's role, desired outcomes and target audiences should inform a strengthening of its strategic partnerships, including the identification of priority upstream partners who provide GNR with data and the downstream partners that use GNR data and evidence. Some stakeholders suggested that the GNR should promote the strengthening of national and regional level networks of independent experts that provide the GNR with context specific data and evidence and could also validate GNR's regional and global analyses, thereby broadening the scientific consensus around GNR analysis and messaging. The relationship with the SUN Movement - as the other major independent, multi-stakeholder, global nutrition initiative - is fundamental. The SUN Movement should provide a key platform for disseminating GNR products and services to advocates and decision makers that respond to their expressed priorities and needs. The SUN Movement is also a potential provider of data, for example, through its Joint Annual Assessments at country-level. Other key platforms for consideration including UN Nutrition and the UN Committee on World Food Security.

Products and services should be driven more by country data and needs. There is a need for improved coherence between products and greater alignment with GNR strategic objectives.

The intended outcomes, target audiences and content of all GNR products and services (reports, country and regional profiles and NAF) should be reviewed in the light of greater clarity on GNR's role, intended outcomes, audiences and partnerships. It could also be useful to more precisely clarify the question/issues on which the GNR aims to analyse and communicate data and evidence. This review identified the following key questions which the GNR addresses through different products:

- What progress is being made on nutrition targets at national, regional, and global levels? (Country Nutrition Profiles and global reports)
- What policy and financial commitments have been made and what progress is being made in delivering on those commitments? (Country Nutrition Profiles, NAF, and global reports)
- What policies, programmes and investments work in different contexts? (Country Nutrition Profiles and global reports)
- What factors enable and hinder the implementation of effective policies and actions? (Country Nutrition Profiles and global reports)
- What are the benefits of investing and promoting good nutrition? What are the political, economic, and other costs of not making progress? (Country Nutrition Profiles and global reports)

The emphasis placed on the GNR's relevance to countries suggests that more attention could be given to the role and content of country nutrition profiles, with a stronger focus on identifying gaps and challenges in national policies, investments, political leadership and technical capacities that provide a basis for the SUN Movement and others to facilitate policy, financial and other forms of country support. Country Nutrition Profiles could be strengthened as "building blocks" for the NAF and GNR reports.

The GNR strategy should outline how the GNR will identify and respond to changes in the external environment.

GNR stakeholders believe for the GNR to sustain its relevance and effectiveness, it is essential for the GNR to be more reactive to changes in the external context and have the capacity to identify emerging issues and political opportunities for promoting nutrition as a priority within wider policy processes at country, regional and global levels. This should be an explicit activity within the GNR strategy with the necessary capacities and resources allocated to perform it effectively.

Ensure an inclusive, participatory process and resources for regularly reviewing and developing GNR strategy and operational approach.

Due to resources being focussed on the delivery of products and services and the lack of time for strategic reflection, inadequate attention has been given to ensuring regular, inclusive, and participatory processes for reviewing and developing GNR strategy and operational approaches which have the buy in of the widest possible range of stakeholders. Many key informants, including SG members, expressed concern that the process for developing the GNR Strategic Vision 2021-2025 had not been sufficiently inclusive and participatory. Consequently, there is inadequate buy in from many stakeholders, many of which believe their views on these key strategic issues have not been sufficiently understood. The prioritisation of content production, implementation of products and focus on external engagement is understandable due to the yearly project cycle of the GNR. However, moving forward there is a need to ensure resources are available for periodic strategic review without compromising implementation.

4.3 Governance

Reaching greater agreement on key strategic issues identified above will help strengthen collaboration, trust, and ways of working within the GNR. However, there is also a need to address the governance arrangements which are hindering the performance of the GNR.

Clarify divisions of responsibility, lines of accountability and ways of working, especially between the host and IEG.

Within the GNR, there are different opinions on roles, ways of working and accountability between the IEG, SG and Host organisation – as illustrated by two different organigrams produced by DI and the IEG. There is currently no agreement on the organigram. Previous attempts to clarify arrangements have not led to consensus and sufficiently effective ways of working. It is clear this is a fundamental barrier to the GNR achieving its objectives and full potential.

Additional work is needed to bring together all entities of the GNR to reach agreement on governance arrangements. Both internal and external stakeholders have reflected that until an in-depth governance review takes place, tensions between entities will limit the GNR's ability to be a relevant and effective mechanism. A particularly pressing consideration is the relationship between the IEG and the Host. Agreement on the roles and responsibilities and the lines of accountability have not been reached for the IEG and Host, particularly with the increased scope of the GNR.

Governance arrangements should protect the independence of the IEG whilst ensuring that GNR products and services are as relevant and effective as possible.

The current governance structure attempts to protect the independence of the IEG. A firewall exists between the IEG members (excluding the Chair/co-Chairs) and the SG, safeguarding the IEG members'

capacity to focus on content development rather than strategic direction and avoid being influenced by specific interests of SG members and their institutions.

Whilst IEG members confirmed that the IEG does genuinely have responsibility for content, strong concerns were expressed about the appropriateness of the Stakeholder Group leading strategy development, given that it includes donors that fund the GNR and representatives of other institutions that the GNR is analysing. Several stakeholders raised how this perceived conflict of interest may tarnish the independence of the GNR and have requested further investigation during the strategic planning phase. Whilst there is consensus that the firewall is necessary there are concerns that it has impacted the communication between IEG and SG and that this needs to be addressed to improve common understanding and improve policy relevance.

There is a perception that an academic approach within the IEG threatens the relevance of the GNR's messaging and findings. As such, the governance arrangements could be strengthened to allow for content to be developed in a way that appeals and is relevant to the GNR's main audience groups (policymakers and advocates) without hindering the independence, rigour, and credibility of the findings. It was suggested that this could be achieved by diversifying the IEG members to not only include academics but also former policymakers that could shape the GNR's content to be as usable as possible.

Increase policy analysis capacities to monitor and dynamically respond to external trends, ensure a systems approach, and identify political opportunities.

The GNR's ability to respond to external events and leverage political opportunities for visibility, could be improved by involving and integrating stakeholders from beyond the nutrition community, especially those at country-level, in both the SG and the IEG. The GNR's ability to exploit the synergies between nutrition and other sectors would be strengthened by including a broader range of stakeholders within its decision-making and content development entities. This would help to ensure the GNR remains a highly relevant resource despite a volatile political and external environment.

Ensure expectations of roles and responsibilities for each entity align with the resources available.

Stakeholder interviews and meeting minutes highlight that, in addition to a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, the expectations of entities have increased. Although it is positive the GNR has grown since 2018, it is essential that resources match this growth. Ensuring that all entities have complete oversight over the resources available will also help to manage expectations. Where there is limited human and financial resource, the expectations regarding workload should be contained until additional funding is acquired. There may be potential in developing a human and financial resource tracker for both the Host and the IEG to ensure transparency.

The composition of the SG should be diversified to include voices where there is the highest burden of malnutrition and representatives outside of nutrition.

The current makeup of the SG is heavily Western-focussed and does not adequately incorporate the voices of countries where there is the highest burden of undernutrition. Although there is a good representation of major UN agencies, donors and some engagement from the private sector, the governance structure would be strengthened by including nutrition advisors from country governments. The saddening news of the passing of Dr Ferew Lemma in December 2021, who has been a fundamental nutrition advocate and specialist in Ethiopia and globally, has left a large gap within the SG. His continued engagement with the GNR highlighted the importance of building on the extensive knowledge within countries in order to

shape the relevance and effectiveness of the GNR at country-level. Additionally, the SG could also have more diverse representation of stakeholders outside of nutrition to help strengthen the GNR's partnerships and relevance to other sectors. The GNR should focus on incorporating these important voices into its governance structures to help mitigate against some of the strategic issues noted above.

IEG needs to develop more inclusive, transparent and collaborative processes in order to ensure messaging is independent, comprehensive, evidence based and objective.

The GNR should aim to develop evidence-based consensus across a wide range of independent experts, drawing on data from country level. Lessons could be learnt from the approach of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in this regard.⁶³ For example, the GNR could consider establishing a global network of experts to draw on data and evidence from country levels, especially on delivery on commitments, what works, benefits of investment. Including additional members to the IEG that go beyond nutrition could strengthen its independence and credibility. This would ensure that the GNR analysis and messaging is comprehensive and not biased towards certain issues or policy responses. Indeed, reintroducing co-Chairs could also help mitigate any perceived bias.

Turnover and personnel change across all three entities has impacted levels of trust and clear understanding of capacity available to support the management and implementation of GNR.

Since 2018, there has been extensive change to the leadership of the IEG, some change to the SG leadership and turnover of programme management and analytical staff within the Host. Such dynamic personnel change has had an impact on the levels of trust between entities and understanding of available resources to manage and implement all services of the GNR. Married with the expansion of the GNR and increased expectations, this has had a negative impact on governance of the GNR. It is remarkable that the GNR has achieved as much as it has given the insufficient clarity and consensus on governance and ways of working issues.

⁶³ For further information on the IPCC see here: [link](#).

5.0 Moving forward

This mid-term review has identified several key strategic and governance issues which GNR stakeholders agree need to be addressed in order to improve the GNR's relevance and effectiveness but differ on how to take this forward. The review team have proposed that 2022 could be considered as a "consolidation year" during which there could be a focus on:

1. Reaching a common agreement on key strategic and governance issues to ensure that the GNR is well-positioned for the longer-term, while at the same time
2. Continue to deliver ongoing priority activities and products, without taking on any new roles or activities.

Suggestions on the way forward with these two issues are presented below.

5.1 Strategic planning process

During the first quarter of 2022, the GNR should undertake a strategic planning process to address findings from this mid-term review in its strategy, operational approach and governance arrangements, to enable further fundraising from the third quarter.

The objective of the process is to ensure the GNR's relevance and effectiveness by incorporating stakeholder views into its design to enhance the structure and outputs, which will strengthen the contribution of the GNR to the overall goal of driving greater action to end malnutrition in all its forms.

The process could be led by a Strategic Planning Oversight Group (SPOG), established by the SG Chair and consisting of the leads of the SG, IEG and the Host, as well as other representatives of the GNR target audience, for example an experienced nutrition leader from the Global South.

The work could be undertaken in three phases. The first two phases would include a series of workshops that review the recommendations of the mid-term review final report. These would also be underpinned by preparation and recommendations on the Theory of Change (ToC), strategy and governance developed by Ecorys/N4D during a preparation phase, building on the findings and recommendations of this mid-term review. The third phase focused on operationalising the new strategy would be undertaken within the GNR.

Key activities across the three phases could include:

- Set time aside during 2022 Q1/Q2 to address key strategy and governance issues, overseen by the SG.
- Prioritise activities/products in pipeline for 2022 to allow time for strategic planning whilst ensuring GNR maintains its momentum and influence.
- The SG establish an ad-hoc Strategic Planning Oversight Group (comprising of the leads of the SG, IEG and Host as well as a representative from the Global South experienced in promoting nutrition within government policies).
- Establish an ad-hoc Advisory Group to ensure views of stakeholders that are not adequately represented in GNR structures are heard (e.g. voices from beyond the nutrition community and country-level representatives).

- Invite different GNR entities and the ad-hoc Advisory Group to share views on findings from the mid-term review.
- Facilitators analyse inputs from the different entities, identify areas of agreement and divergence and support Oversight Group to hold dialogues with entities (bilateral discussions, group discussions and workshops) to develop consensus.
- Develop a GNR Charter 2023-2030 (including long-term strategic goals, theory of change, operating model, governance arrangements) and revised Strategy 2023-2025.

5.2 2022 priorities

It would be advisable to prioritise activities and products that are in the pipeline for 2022 given the need for GNR structures to devote significant time to reach an agreed way forward on key issues and avoid overreach, particularly during the first half of the year. There should be flexibility in the programme of work and budget for the second half of 2022 to take account of decisions made during the strategic planning process.

The review team, informed by consultations during the mid-term review, considers the following to be priority activities and products on which work should proceed at the same time as the strategic planning process is on-going: (1) a report analysing the potential contribution of 2021 Year of Action commitments to progress in reducing malnutrition, with appropriate dissemination activities and (2) the continuation of N4G tracking (pre-Year of Action).

2022 Global Nutrition Report

An analysis of commitments made during the Nutrition Year of Action, not only in terms of their 'SMARTness', but also investigating the potential contribution of the Year of Action commitments (if delivered) to accelerating country progress in reducing malnutrition could be useful from a policy and advocacy perspective. This could involve an analysis of the extent to which commitments are in line with evidence of what is needed and what works. It would, therefore, go beyond highlighting how the NAF will work and analysing the quality of individual commitments in isolation from what they could mean collectively for reducing malnutrition.

Pre-Year of Action N4G Tracking

The GNR is already committed to continue tracking pre-2021 N4G commitments and there are high expectations that it will continue to do so. It would be useful if the Data Update Reports, the development of the NAF and updates of Country Nutrition Profiles are put on hold until their relevance and effectiveness have been clarified through the strategic planning process.

Annex One: Mid-term Review Terms of Reference

Objective of the mid-term review

The GNR intends to carry out an independent mid-term review of the programme. The objective of this review is to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the GNR and whether there are any changes needed in order to deliver on the strategic vision for the programme between 2022–2025. The review will aim to provide action-orientated recommendations that would inform the design of the programme for the future.

Framing questions

1. Where does the GNR sit in the wider ecosystem of actors working towards a world free from malnutrition, and does it need to change in the future in response to the changing external environment?
2. Are the products and services provided by the GNR meeting the needs and priorities of its main stakeholders, and are they influencing action? What are the examples of success? Are there any changes needed for the future?
3. Are the products and services provided by the GNR disseminated successfully and in a timely manner? Are they accessible and have they had the desired uptake by key stakeholders?
4. What partnerships should the GNR sustain or develop within and beyond the nutrition community to more effectively achieve its objectives outlined under the strategic vision?
5. Are there any changes needed to the programmes and funding arrangement to support the GNR's ambition for the future?

Approach and methodology

The methodology for the review will be developed in detail by the selected evaluator(s) based on experience and an understanding of the objectives of the review. However, the expected approach would cover a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, such as:

- A desk review of key documents and data related both to GNR products and services and GNR programme governance
- Key informant interviews with internal and external GNR stakeholders
- Presentation of emerging findings and recommendations with the Programme Board for feedback and comment.

Key stakeholders

- The evaluator(s) would need to gather input from the following key programme stakeholders:
 - IEG Chair and members
 - Stakeholder Group co-chair and members
 - Host staff
 - Representatives from the target audience.

Deliverables

The evaluator(s) are expected to produce the following:

- An initial work plan and details of the methodological approach to be taken. This should include a detailed timeline for the review broken down into clear phases for initial research, data collection, analysis and validation, drafting of main findings, consultation and finalisation and dissemination of the findings.
- A draft and final report with key recommendations for future design of the programme.
- A validation presentation, prior to completion of the final report, to present key findings and recommendations.

Estimated timeline

The review is expected to take place between June and August 2021. The exact number of days will be determined in discussion with the selected evaluator(s).

Governance and accountability

The accountability for the review rests with the Programme Board. The implementation of the review will be managed by the GNR programme manager, Hannah Sweeney. Information and updates will be shared between the evaluator(s) and the GNR programme manager on a weekly basis to ensure that the process is on track.

Professional qualifications

Evaluator(s) are expected to possess the following minimum qualifications and experience:

- At least 10 years of experience with evaluations
- Knowledge of global reports and/or accountability mechanisms
- Advanced knowledge of evaluation design and methodology
- Excellent writing and communication skills
- Fluency in English
- Experience of working in the nutrition sector is desirable but not essential.

Budget

Funds will be made available to cover consultancy fees and any other related costs.

Instructions for tendering

Timelines for the tender process are outlined below.

A proposal must consist of the following and be submitted to Hannah Sweeney, GNR Programme Manager (hannah.sweeney@devinit.org):

- A technical proposal describing how you would undertake the mid-term review, including:
 - Details of similar reviews and evaluations that you have conducted, which demonstrate that you have the requisite skills.
 - Three references from past reviews or evaluations conducted and examples of work.
 - Team composition together with relevant CVs.
 - Proposed methodology for the mid-term review and evaluative frameworks they apply.
 - Timeline and milestones.
- A financial proposal consisting of:
 - Proposed budget
 - Proposed payment schedule.

Proposal evaluation process

Submissions will be reviewed and evaluated on:

- The extent of the evaluator(s)'s understanding of the details of the requirements.
- The comprehensiveness of methodology, showing milestones and checkpoints relevant to this project and an understanding of risk to successful delivery.
- The makeup of the proposed team, their qualifications and experience.
- The extent of the evaluator(s)'s experience in conducting similar reviews and evaluations.
- Transparency of cost and value for money evident in the financial proposal. We will accept submissions from both individual consultants and evaluation agencies.